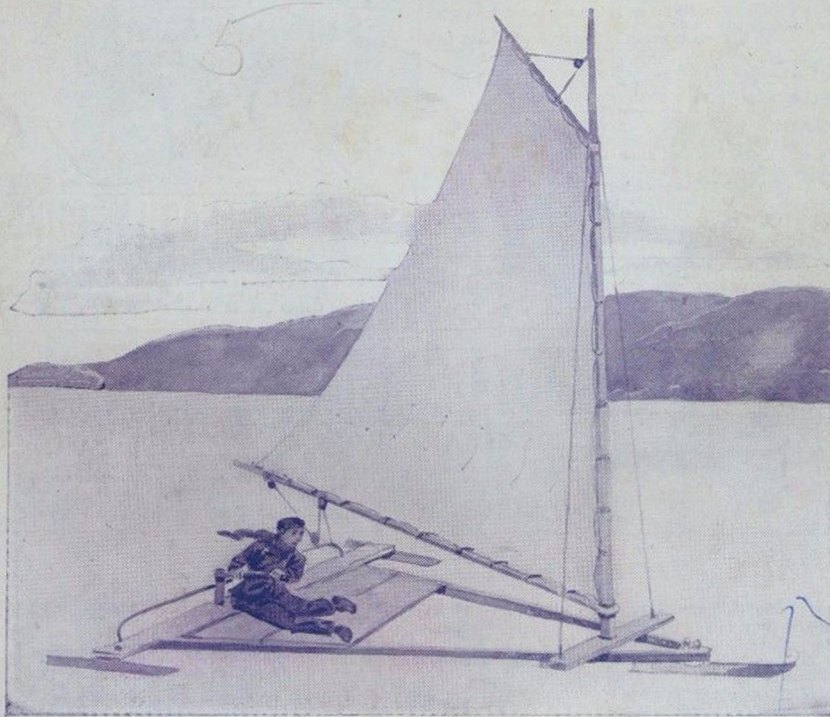


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THE ARGOSY



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"A Winter Wolf Hunt."

From the painting by O. de Tonnar.

THE ARGOSY.

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No. 3.

WINTER SPORTS IN THE COUNTRY.

The fun that snow and frost bring in their train—Seasonable chat on trapping, tobogganing, snow shoeing, and ice boating.

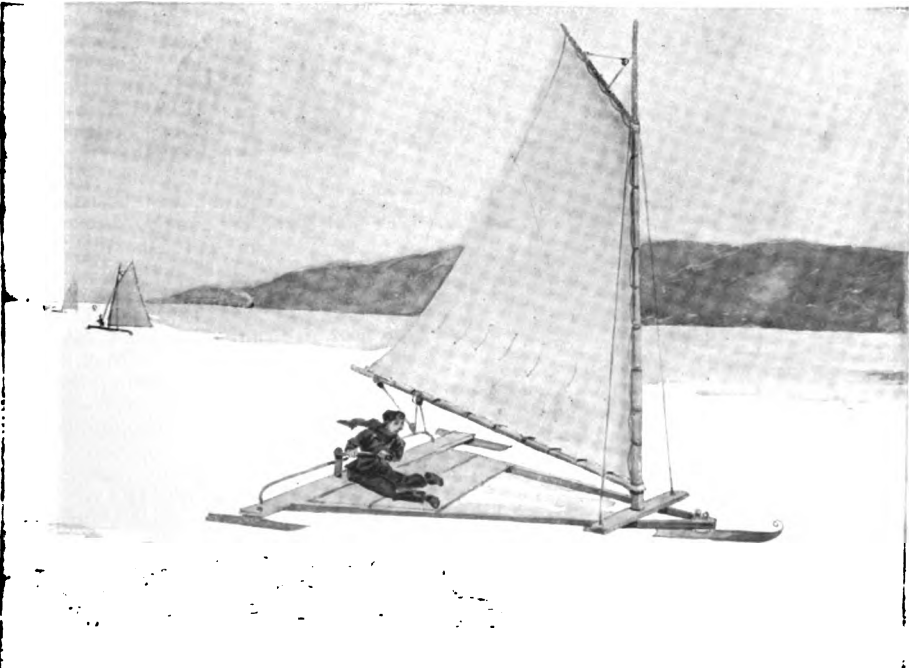
By E. M. Halliday.

CITY people only know the country when it toils. In the summer months, when they flock to it out of the towns, thinking they are learning all its resources of pleasure, inhabitants and soil are creating food for the long season when nature hides the earth under a white crust, spreading a great playground for the workers. Then the sports of the country begin!

In many cases the city man of advanced

years was born in the country, and carries memories of skating and hunting and coasting and trapping that made the winter gay. But the American boy, like the American man, is progressive, and every year he learns some new trick in his sports.

The boy trapper of thirty years ago knew the keen delight of the sportsman's sense of risking something himself when he went out to match his skill against



Ice Boating on the Hudson.

animal cunning, for the lynx and the wild cat and the wolf lurked all about the woods, and there was always a chance of breaking into the winter sleep of a bear. The trapper of those days owned rude

After the art is once learned, remarkable time may be made with little fatigue. There are snow shoe clubs all over the Northern States, usually with a club house far in the woods. The chief delight of



The Adirondack Forest in Winter.
From a photograph by Woodward, Plattsburgh.

snow shoes, but they were for business and not for pleasure.

The Canadian snow shoe is very different from the Norwegian "skees," which are something like miniature toboggans, made very long and narrow, and shod with iron. Our snow shoe is made a good deal like a tennis racket. A strap goes across the toe of the moccasined foot, and the snow shoe is dragged. The novice always tries to lift the shoe, with the result that he goes headlong into the drift.

the members is in the moonlight tramps to reach the roaring fires, the hot suppers, and the dancing hall, which await their coming. An expert snow shoer will dance all night, and walk back home over the crust with unabated energy.

In 1882 the first ice carnival was held in Montreal, and Americans were taught some of the typical sports of a true cold climate.

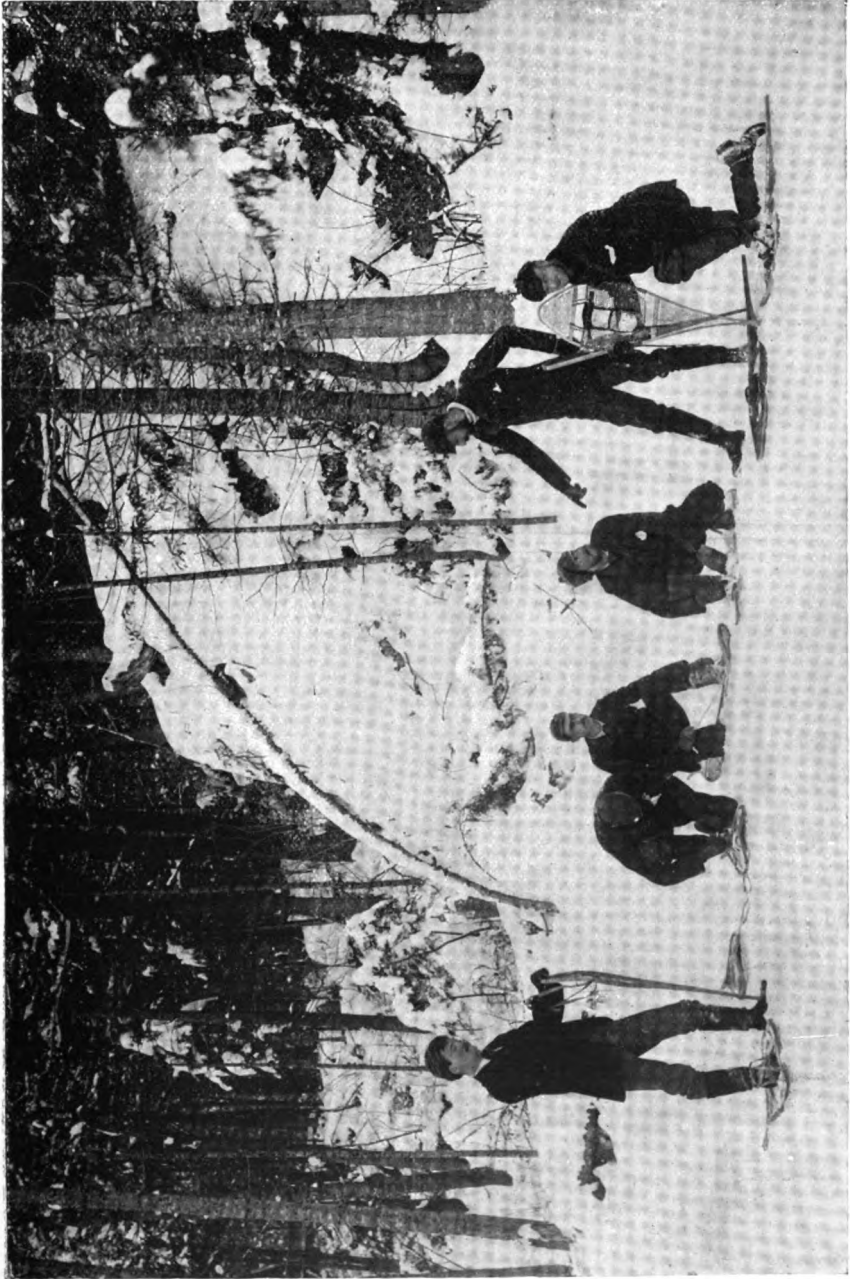
The toboggan was the first of these novelties to be grafted upon our own winter pleasures. This long, narrow raft of thin boards, turned up at one end, is peculiarly Canadian. It was invented by the Indians two hundred years ago for fur carrying. Some young Frenchman slid down hill on one once, and after that he never wanted to stop.

On the hillsides that are not too steep, boards are often placed on edge in the track of the toboggan. When the latter strikes one of these, it springs into the air like a live thing, and goes on with a new impetus, unless it happens to take a twist, which it usually does; then it sends its passengers flying in every direction. But that is half the fun. Blanket coats and furs protect from knocks as well as from cold. The laughing crowd scramble

out of the snow, ready to begin all over again.

A variety of tobogganing that is very popular in the rural districts is "bobbing." A bob is a long sled, furnished with a set of movable runners in front by which it may be steered. Sometimes a "bob" will seat fifteen or twenty persons.

Some ten years ago bobbing broke out as a craze in the city of Albany, noted for its hilly streets. Certain avenues on fixed nights were set apart by the police for the



THE SNOW SHOE CLUB.
From a photograph by Woodward. Plattsburgh.



Saranac in Winter—The Lower Lake and Toboggan Slide.

From a photograph by Wineland, Plattsburgh.

sport, and bobs of the most elaborate description were built, painted in fantastic colors, dubbed with terror inspiring names, and furnished with deep toned gongs that would put those on the cable cars and "trolleys" to the blush. But in spite of all precautions accidents were so frequent that bobbing had to be forbidden within the city limits, thus emphasizing anew the fact that to know the true delights of winter one must leave the town.

The ice yacht is the delight of the boy who lives near a river in northern climes. Where his father was content to skate and slide, he flies.

The ice yacht is not properly a boat at all, but a framework on runners, rigged with a sail. It is managed much like a canoe with a sail. The first rate ice boat, well made, has been known to keep ahead of an express train as the two flew along on river and track.

It requires unlimited pluck, judgment, and lightning activity to sail one of these yachts, but to the boy who can do it, there comes a wild exhilaration which no

other sport can give. The world whizzes by; the icy splinters and the loose snow tingle against his face, but he knows nothing of it. He is swept along, a part of the blast—is taken into the very motion and spirit of the storm.

The great courses in America for ice-boating are the Hudson and the Shrewsbury rivers, the latter in New Jersey, just back of Sandy Hook. On this stream, January 22, 1883, the *Scud*, of Red Bank, made fifteen miles in 20 minutes, 40 seconds.

One of the most fascinating and widely indulged of winter sports is skating, and although the city now and then furnishes opportunity for the pastime, it is in the country that the ring of the steel on the ice carries the most unalloyed delight to the heart of the skater. Here are to be found the long stretches of glassy surface, over which one may glide for miles in the bracing air, with an ever varying panorama spread on either side. Here, too, may be built the bonfire on the ice, around which the skaters gather to tell stories and discuss the matching of



A Snow Shoe Party at Saranac Lake.
From a photograph—Copyright, 1889, by S. R. Suddard, Glens Falls.

one another to see who can fly swiftest on the steel runners.

Another winter sport that the boy in the country may enjoy in the cold months is fishing through the ice. Sometimes he can keep several lines going at once, fastening them to little flags which will be agitated when a fish nibbles at the hook, informing the fisherman that he has a "bite." When fish are plentiful, the running from one flag to another makes very exciting work, and furnishes occupation for the leg muscles that they never get

meadows white plains of purity, with the music of the bells unmingled with the city's clatter, and the exhilarating air redolent only of frost!

Curling is a winter amusement very popular in Scotland, and played to some extent by the Scotch in this country. Large flat stones are sent scudding over the ice toward a certain mark, and with the endeavor to displace the stones of one's opponent which may be nearer the coveted goal. Taken all in all, while the joys of rural life in summer are not to be



A Trapper

From a photograph by Notman, Montreal.

when their owner angles in the usual way from a boat or the stringpiece of a wharf.

And where else can the charm of sleighing be so keenly realized as away from the streets of the towns, where the steam heat underneath soon turns the snow to slush, and the smoke overhead sullies its whiteness even while it does remain. What is more enchanting than a winter landscape, the evergreens laden with their fleecy burden, the

despised, the pleasures that may be extracted from real winter weather in the country are as many and varied as the warmer half of the year can provide. And he is the more healthful who, instead of seeking to protect himself from Jack Frost's rigorous blasts, freely faces them.

A winter in the country is a necessary part of every man's education. And we can see its invigorating effect on those who were brought up to know its joys.



THE BANDITS OF MUSKRAT POND.

By William Murray Graydon.

I.

THE Admiral and Sirloin stood on the river bank, each gazing intently across the broad, sunny waters of the Susquehanna. Sirloin was a big, white bulldog with a ferocious aspect and a temper to match. The Admiral was a chubby, freckled faced lad of sixteen.

His real name was Ned Purdey, but he had won his naval title by planning and commanding a highly successful canoeing cruise during the previous summer. The boys of Middletown Ferry acknowledged him as the leader of all their sports and games, and, on the whole, Ned was worthy of their confidence.

Today the Admiral's face was clouded with vexation. Since dinner he had been vainly hunting his two chums, and now he was about to abandon the quest.

Suddenly the noise of hammer and saw prompted him to further search. Climbing down the bank he followed the pebbly shore to Sammy Barlow's little carpenter shop. Here he found the missing lads intently watching the veteran boat builder as he pegged away at a bateau.

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming here?" said the Admiral wrathfully. "I've been hunting everywhere."

"And so have we been hunting *you*," said Terry Watson. "This was the last place we looked."

"That's so," corroborated Pres Dagget. "We were just going to start off again."

The Admiral was slightly mollified. "Well," he said, with the air of one who has a great announcement to make, "I wanted to tell you fellows something. There's a new boy in town."

"We know it," calmly replied Terry.

"We met him down at the river after dinner," explained Pres. "I said hello, and so did he. Then we got to talking. He's fifteen years old, and his name is Arthur Hamilton. He lives at Cedarcroft, that big house back of town with the hedge around it. He'll only be here until Christmas, and then he's going away to school. His father's an awfully rich man."

"I hope you had a good time," replied the Admiral sneeringly; for he resented the fact that his companions had stolen a march on him. "Arthur sounds like a baby name, and the fellow looked as if he was afraid to go out of doors when it rained. I saw him this morning. He has blue eyes and curly hair—just like a girl; and his shoes are shiny, and he wears starched cuffs and a stand up collar. He's a regular doll baby. He'd soon get his clothes spoilt and mussed up if he played with us."

"I guess his folks make him wear those things," suggested Pres pityingly. "Any way, he can't help looking like a girl."

"And it ain't his fault if he has a rich father, and lives in a big house with grounds around it," spoke up Terry. "He's a real nice fellow from the way he talks. He likes to go fishing and swimming and play baseball, and he has lots of rods and tackle, and a knife with 'most everything in it. His father won't let him have a gun, though. He showed me a book with a splendid picture on the cover, and said he'd lend it to me next. It's all about bandits."

"Humph!" replied the Admiral, not knowing what else to say.

Already he trembled for his laurels, and feared that the strange lad might oust him from his leadership among the village boys.

That evening the new boy came out to renew his acquaintance with Pres and Terry. They promptly introduced him to the Admiral, and told him all about their famous canoe trip, and their camping ground up Sweet Arrow Creek, and related divers other exploits.

The Admiral's fears vanished when he saw how vastly the new boy appreciated the honor of his acquaintance, and he even went so far as to say that Arthur might join the crowd, if he wanted to. Of course Arthur did, and by way of celebrating his election he took the whole party home, where he showed them his treasures, and generously distributed fish hooks and marbles.

This happened in the latter part of August, and for a week or two the boys had a jolly time together. Arthur proved quite an acquisition. Most of his life had been spent in large cities, and this only added a keener zest to his enjoyment of country life.

Not that he was less skilled in outdoor craft than his new friends, however; for he had been at Bar Harbor and the Adirondacks, and had canoed and fished on the St. Lawrence. He was full of schemes, some of which rather startled his companions, and might have caused trouble and sensation in the village had they been carried out. But he tacitly showed deference and respect to the Admiral's judgment in all things, thus making him a firm friend, and avoiding even a suspicion of jealousy.

Of course the Admiral was flattered, and so it is not surprising that he was led blindly into the enticing escapade that was destined to sully the fair fame which his previous achievements had won for him.

School was to open on the 10th of September, and the boys dismally anticipated a curtailment of their fishing and boating trips. But when the day came there was no teacher; instead arrived a letter saying that he had sprained his ankle severely, and would be confined to his house for several weeks. The school board held a meeting at once, and decided to postpone the opening until the first of October, instead of seeking a substitute.

This unexpected vacation vastly pleased the boys, and they immediately held a consultation to determine how to spend it. The Admiral wanted to go camping up the Sweet Arrow, the mouth of which lay directly across the river from the village. Pres and Terry were of the same mind, but Arthur looked dubious, and said nothing.

"Aren't you in favor of it?" asked the Admiral. "You know September is the best month of all for camping. It's not too hot in the daytime, and at night you can easily keep warm under blankets."

"Of course I'm in favor of it," replied Arthur. "It's a bully plan, but—but I'm not sure that father will let me go. You see, there's a tutor coming tomorrow, and I've got to study. Father is away now, but I'll ask him as soon as he comes back."

On second thought Arthur concluded that his chances of getting permission were fairly good, and taking this for granted, the boys hastily made preparations for the expedition up the Sweet Arrow.

But the afternoon before they were to start Arthur appeared with a clouded face.

"Father says I can't go," he announced. "He came back this morning, and then went away again. He says I must stay home and study."

"Too bad! It's a shame," burst from Pres and Terry.

"Did you try coaxing?" asked the Admiral.

"Yes; but it didn't work. I don't mind so much, though, because I've thought of something better than going up the creek. Do you know that you look awfully like Rodrigo?"

"Me?" exclaimed the Admiral. "Who's Rodrigo?"

"Why, Rodrigo was the robber chief I told you fellows about, called the Bandit of the Sierras. Don't you remember how they lived in the mountains, and stole captives for ransom, and got awfully rich?"

"Yes, I remember," replied the Admiral, swelling with pride to think that he resembled that famous bandit. "What about it?"

"Well, I've got a splendid scheme," continued Arthur. "Let's form a band of robbers, and go off to that wild place back by Muskrat Pond, where the Indian Path is. Of course we'll need arms and ammunition, but I know an easy way to get them. My room is on the second floor, and tonight I'll leave a ladder under the window. Then you fellows must come and abduct me, and hide me somewhere, tied hand and foot."

"In the morning you must pretend you're going camping up the creek, only instead of that you'll hide the boat at the mouth of Silver Run, and then we'll all go back through the woods to Muskrat Pond. When we get fixed you must send a letter to father, saying you have kidnapped me for ransom, and that he must pay fifty dollars if he wants me released. I guess fifty dollars will be enough to buy our equipments. Father will never suspect that you fellows have anything to do with it, for everybody will believe that you're camping up the creek. Of course you'll sign robber names to the letter instead of your own."

"Just think of the jolly times we can have! We'll build a cabin in some deep part of the forest, or else live in a cave. Nuts will soon be ripe, and we can get all the game and fish we need. When we want other supplies we'll sally out by night and raid some farm house."

Arthur's proposition fairly dumfounded his companions. The Admiral puckered his lips and gave a long whistle, while Pres and Terry gasped for breath. They were undeniably fascinated by the plan, though they realized full well the consequences that it would likely lead to.

The Admiral was the first to succumb to the wiles of the tempter; then followed Pres and Terry, for to oppose their leader would have seemed high treason to them.

Having thus crossed the Rubicon the boys found it an easy matter to stifle conscience. The Admiral brought his experience and master mind to bear on all knotty questions, and by supper time each little detail was arranged with a nicety that forbade failure, and would have done credit to a far worthier object.

The programme was duly carried out. An hour after midnight the Admiral swung from his window into the heavy branches of a maple tree, and safely reached the ground.

At the upper end of the village he joined Pres and Terry, who had likewise escaped from home without detection; the one by scaling the back porch, and the other by creeping down stairs in his stocking feet. They hurried to Cedarcroft, and climbed over the low stone wall into the grounds. They found the ladder concealed under the shrubbery, and quickly lifted it to Arthur's window.

Arthur was waiting to be kidnapped. He had a pair of blankets done up in a shawl strap—the only things that could be taken without exciting suspicion.

"Wait a minute," he said. "The room must look as though there had been a struggle."

So he disordered the bed clothes, upset a couple of chairs, and pulled the cover from a small table by the window. Then he insisted that the boys should bind his arms and gag him, as was customary with the bandits of the Sierras.

It proved a ticklish matter to get the captive to the ground, but it was finally accomplished without rousing any one in the house. The ladder was put back under the shrubbery, and the boys hurried across the fields to the mouth of Silver Run, which was about a mile down the river. Here the prisoner was untied and ungagged, and as the moon was shining brightly he declared that he was not afraid to stay alone.

"I'll wrap the blankets around me and lie down in that old lime kiln over by the cliff," he said. "Of course I'll pretend that I'm bound hand and foot and can't escape. You fellows had better hurry home now, for if your folks discover that you're out the whole thing will be knocked in the head. And then you've got to make an early start in the morning, you know."

"That's so," assented the Admiral. "Come on, boys." He led them briskly up the river, and an hour later each was sound asleep in bed, and dreaming of what the morrow held in store.

II.

"I thought you were never coming," said Arthur, the next morning when his friends appeared. "I've been up for an hour, and I'm as hungry as a bear. Give me something to eat."

While he attacked the provisions his companions unloaded the boat, and moored it in a little bay some yards up the run. There was scant likelihood of any one finding it, for the spot was rarely visited, and was surrounded by dense undergrowth.

The tent was left in the boat, but the luggage—blankets, provisions, tinware, and fishing tackle—was divided as equally as possible. Then, with the Admiral and Sirloin in the lead, the boys started on their long tramp to Muskrat Pond, which was seven miles back from the river.

The boys found the journey a stiffish one, and their heavy loads necessitated so

many pauses for rest and refreshment that it was mid afternoon when they reached their destination. A year or two before, they had visited the spot on a brief fishing trip, and now it seemed to them more beautiful than their memory had pictured it.

The pond was a mile and a half in diameter, and was indented with little bays where reeds and pond lilies grew thickly.

For a camping place the boys chose a narrow strip of turf between the shore of the pond and a steep bluff. With pine boughs they built a lean-to against a detached boulder that must have at one time rolled down from the hills. The cliff over head was sparsely timbered, and on its face could be seen a series of smoothly worn steps. This was the Indian Path, and tradition held that it had been hollowed out by the feet of countless generations of red men.

The boys clambered about on the risky stairway until it was time to prepare supper.

There was something for each to do. The Admiral was cook, with Pres and Arthur for his assistants. Terry went fishing up the pond, and soon returned with two splendid pike.

The table was set on a flat stone, and the bill of fare consisted of fried fish and potatoes, coffee, ham sandwiches, and apple pie. The boys were charmed with their first meal in this lonely wilderness, and voted that playing robber was awfully jolly.

It was a little different when darkness settled down on the forest, but they rolled themselves in blankets, and huddled close together on the floor of the lean-to, with Sirloin at their feet. They were too tired and sleepy to stay long awake, and morning, which seemed to come very quickly, found them in high spirits again.

When breakfast was over they repressed the temptation to go fishing, and settled down to the serious business of the day.

"The first thing is to make arrangements for getting that ransom money," said the Admiral, "for we need guns and ammunition badly. I guess one or two of us will have to tramp over to York to buy them. Then, when we are fixed up like real robbers we must hunt a cave, or else build a regular shanty in some out of the way place across the pond. We can't stay here long, for this flimsy thing won't be of any account in rainy or cold weather."

"And it's too easy to find, any way," added Arthur. "You know the Vigilantes may get after us as they did the bandits of the Sierras. What we need is a stronghold that is inaccessible, and from which we can pour a raking fire on our enemies. But first of all we must have the money to buy equipments. Who brought paper and pencil along?"

"I did," replied the Admiral. "Here you are." He tossed Arthur a badly chew-

ed stump of lead pencil and a crumpled sheet of brown wrapping paper.

"Best I could get," he added. "I was going to take some of my sister's, but it was stamped with her initials."

"This will do," said Arthur. "You know Rodrigo used to write on sheets of bark and strips of buckskin."

He stretched the paper on the back of a tin plate, and began the important composition with slow and careful movements, stopping every now and then to survey his companions with a perplexed air. At length the task was completed to his satisfaction.

"There," he said proudly. "Listen now, till I read it:

"MR. JAMES HAMILTON,

"Cedarcroft, Middletown Ferry.

"You will know by this token that your son Arthur is a prisoner among desperate bandits, who are holding him for a ransom. He will be promptly released on the following conditions: first, that before nine o'clock tomorrow morning you place fifty dollars under the roots of the dead buttonwood tree that stands at the mouth of Silver Run; second, that neither you nor any one else shall be in the vicinity of the designated spot after the hour named. If you fail to deliver the money, or attempt any treachery, your son's ears will be sent to you in a box.

"Signed.

"RODRIGO,

"Chief of Bandits."

Arthur folded the paper, and turned complacently to his companions.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Terry.

"That'll fetch him, sure," said Pres.

The Admiral felt that his leadership was at stake, but as he could really find no flaw in the document he, too, expressed approval.

"Father was to come home this morning," resumed Arthur, "so one of you fellows must go down to the village this afternoon—or perhaps there had better be two, for company."

"Yes; that's so," assented the Admiral. "Shall we draw lots?"

"If you want to," said Arthur; "but I think you ought to be one. You're just the fellow for such a delicate mission as this."

Flattery was the Admiral's weak point, and he quickly agreed to go. Then Terry volunteered to accompany him, and Pres, who was rather lazy, offered no objections.

"Well, that settles it," said Arthur. "Try to reach the village about dark, and be sure that no one sees you. Put the letter under the front door, and run as soon as you ring the bell. You had better take blankets along, so you can sleep comfortably in the boat over night. You'll find the money there on time, and all you need do is to take it, and hurry back."

"Look here, though," replied the Admiral uneasily, "don't bandits always keep their word? Your father will have a

nice opinion of us when he pays the ransom money, and then finds that you don't come home. You said that Rodrigo was a perfect gentleman, and always acted honorably."

"That's true," admitted Arthur, "and we'll be just as honorable. I know a way to fix things all right. I'll send another letter to father telling him that I don't want to come home, and that I've concluded to join the band of robbers of my own free will. Won't that do it?"

"Of course it will," said the Admiral heartily. "You've got a level head, Arthur. Hullo! What's that?" he added, in a tone of alarm, as a crackling noise was heard in a dense alder thicket a few yards up the shore of the pond.

Before the startled boys could investigate Sirloin sprang up, bristling with rage, and made a bolt for the spot, and a moment later the thicket rang with hoarse barks and angry threats. The tumult ended in a dull crack followed by a shrill yelp of pain, and out rushed Sirloin, with a very crestfallen air.

Close behind came a rough looking man, with a knotted club in his hand, and a heavy pack on his back.

"Hold that brute, you fellows," he growled, "unless you want me to hit him another lick."

The Admiral grabbed Sirloin, and quickly fastened a short strap to his collar. This was hardly necessary, for the dog showed no disposition to renew the fight. One taste of that club was quite sufficient.

Meanwhile the man had seated himself on his pack in front of the lean-to and lighted a dirty clay pipe, at which he was puffing with cool indifference.

The boys felt somewhat reassured, and took a critical look at their visitor.

To judge from the bulging contents of his pack he was probably a tin peddler. His face was covered with a stubbly growth of red hair, and its expression was rather suggestive of good humor.

He wore a dingy canvas helmet, a red flannel shirt, and a black coat with tails, that had evidently come to him second hand. His trousers were tucked into a pair of dilapidated boots.

He smoked stolidly on, and the silence finally grew so oppressive that the Admiral ventured to ask: "Have you come far?"

"A purty good stretch," mumbled the man, without removing the pipe from his mouth. "I'm taking a short cut over the hill to York. I left Lewisberry at daylight this morning. 'Taint often I meet any one on this route. You fellers air campin', I reckon?"

"Yes," replied the Admiral; "we ran up here for a little fishing."

There was another pause, and then Terry brilliantly remarked that it was a fine day.

"Bad weather for ducks, though," answered the man, with a friendly grin.

Then he suddenly caught sight of the letter, which Arthur had unknowingly dropped in the grass, and before the boys could interfere he had reached for it and read the contents.

"Look here, that ain't very good manners," exclaimed the Admiral resentfully.

"Give me that," implored Arthur. "It's mine."

The man thrust the letter into his pocket, and uttered a wheezing sound that was very like repressed laughter. Then he looked at the boys with mock terror, and exclaimed dolefully:

"Just my luck! Here I've gone an' tumbled into a gang of bandits. That's what I get fur cuttin' through the woods instead o' goin' round by the road. An' now I reckon I'll be stripped of all my vallybles. Which of you fellers is Rodrigo the bandit chief?"

He waited for an answer, but none came. The boys were in no mood for jesting. Their confused and downcast looks showed that they regarded the discovery of their plot as a very serious affair indeed.

They were strongly tempted to overpower the rash stranger, and convince him that he had good ground for real instead of mock alarm. Had the Admiral made the first move the others would have rallied to his assistance.

The man took the pipe from his mouth, and chuckled till he shook all over. Then he fixed a penetrating glance on the boys, who felt instinctively that he was reading them through and through.

"You young scallywags have run away from home," he declared finally. "Don't go fur to deny it. I'll admit this here dockymint ain't as plain as it might be, but I kin see through it purty clear all the same. S'pose you make a clean breast of it now, an' mebbe I kin tell you something what you'll like to hear."

He uttered the last sentence in wheedling, coaxing tones, and relaxed his grim expression.

The Admiral glanced meaningly at his companions, and drew them a few yards away from the lean-to.

"It's a bad scrape," he whispered, "and the only way out of it that I can see is to tell this fellow all about our plans, and offer him five or ten dollars of the ransom money if he promises to keep quiet and let us alone."

"That ought to work," said Arthur, "for he looks as if he needed money pretty badly."

Pres and Terry also favored the scheme, and as the peddler was looking that way rather suspiciously the boys revealed their plans to him without further delay.

He smoked stolidly as he listened to the ambitious tale, but he did not say whether he would accept the proffered bribe or not. His bump of curiosity was extremely large, for, not content with a meager outline of the story, he insisted on probing

deeper, and by adroit questioning he gleaned from the boys every little detail of the kidnapping, and of the subterfuge by which they had made it appear that they had gone camping up the Sweet Arrow, and of their plans for extorting the ransom money from Mr. Hamilton.

In fact he soon knew every bit as much as the boys themselves, and then he went a step farther by asking Arthur what kind of a man his father was, and how much money he was worth.

The boys were considerably mystified by such a keen cross examination, but the peddler was in no hurry to enlighten them. He declared that he wanted a little time to reflect, and propping himself comfortably against a tree, he slowly and meditatively smoked two pipes of tobacco.

Now and then his face lighted up, as though he had just thought of something nice, and sometimes he mumbled inaudible words.

When the boys' patience was nearly exhausted, he knocked the ashes from his pipe and dropped it into his pocket.

"I've been thinkin'," he announced gravely, "and as a result of my cogertations, I've concluded to make you chaps an offer. Yer see I've took quite a fancy to you, and I'm satisfied that you an' me can pull together pretty well. First of all, I'm going to trust you with a secret that will make you open your eyes."

He paused impressively, and the boys wondered what was coming next.

"You chaps will be surprised to hear that I'm a bandit myself," resumed the peddler. "I belong to a gang of robbers what have a lair in the mountains about five miles north of here. This tin peddlin' is only a fake. You see, I tramp around the country with my pack, and spot likely places for the gang to rob. My name is J. Gunnison Tucker, but bein' a plain sort of a man, without any fandango about me, I like everybody to call me Gunny Tucker. That's right, ain't it?"

The boys only nodded, for they were too dumfounded to speak.

"I—I didn't know there was another gang of bandits in this part of the country," the Admiral ventured to say.

"Of course ye didn't," replied Gunny Tucker. "Our fellows know how to keep a secret. Howsomever, that's another matter. What I want to say now is this: I'm tired of the gang, because they ain't as polite an' honorable as regular bandits ought to be, and they don't treat me square, neither. Whenever there's a divvy of gold watches, an' bank notes, I get left out in the cold. So if you fellows will say the word I'll join your crowd right now. I don't want to be chief, you understand; a plain, everyday membership is good enough fur me. That's my offer now. What do you think of it?"

The boys were taken quite by surprise, and hardly knew what to think. But they

felt flattered and honored by the proposal, and, besides, it seemed to open a new way out of the scrape. If they refused, the peddler would probably take some horrible revenge for the slight.

"If the other fellows are agreed you can join us," said the Admiral, after a hasty deliberation.

"I'm willing," exclaimed Arthur.

"And so am I," echoed Pres and Terry.

Sirloin growled, for he was wiser than his young masters.

"That's the way to talk," said Gunny Tucker approvingly. "You won't be sorry for it. And now, bein' as I'm a duly elected member of your band, suppose we come right to business. We'll have dinner first, an' then I'll strike fur the village with this here letter. I'll deliver it tonight, an' be back afore noon tomorrow with the money."

The Admiral looked blue.

"But—but you see, Terry and I were going to attend to that," he stammered.

"Well, you kin go if you want to," replied Gunny Tucker, good naturedly. "I thought I was offerin' to do you a favor. It's ten to one this chap's father will hide somewhere around that buttonwood tree tomorrow morning in spite of the warning. If he sees you fellows he'll ketch you sure, and the whole thing will be spoilt. If he sees *me* come and take the money he'll know it's all deal earnest, an' he won't dare show himself."

"That's so," murmured several of the boys, and the Admiral himself was so convinced by this line of argument that he yielded the point without demur.

"I thought you'd veer around to that way of thinking," said Gunny Tucker.

"You see I know how to engineer a thing like this, and after we get the money I'll take a trip to York to buy the rifles and ammunition; then we'll peek around for a good place to build our cabin. And now, boys, as it's getting late suppose you hurry along that dinner."

"We'll have it ready in a jiffy," replied the Admiral. "Stir lively, you fellows."

The best that the larder afforded was spread out on the flat rock that did duty for a table, and the boys almost forgot to eat as they watched the procession of sandwiches, pie, doughnuts, sponge cake, cold meat, and cups of coffee that marched down Gunny Tucker's throat. He helped to wash the dishes and tidy the camp, and then something suddenly seemed to strike him, for he scratched his head, and knitted his brow into deep wrinkles.

"I come purty near startin' off an' leavin' you fellows in an ugly predicament," he said. "I might 'a' knowed that it warn't safe fur you to stay here. Yer see my crowd'll be lookin' fur me by sundown, and when I don't turn up they'll go out on the hunt, thinkin' something's wrong. Like as not they'll steer this way, an' if you chaps was to be found here it would be all

up with you, sure. Them fellers ain't angels, not by a long chalk."

Hearing this the boys looked scared.

"What would they do to us?" asked the Admiral, opening his eyes very wide.

"Tie rocks around your necks and chuck you inter the pond, I reckon," replied Gunny Tucker cheerfully. "It ain't likely they'd torture you, bein' you're so young; though that would depend upon what kind of a humor they was in."

"But you needn't be scairt, boys; I reckon I kin fix that. The last time I come this way—it was early in the summer—I seen an old skiff lyin' high an' dry up here along the pond. No doubt it's there yet, an' if it is I'll fetch it right down here, an' take you an' your traps over to that island afore I start fur the village. Then I'll feel easy, knowin' you're safe till I come back. I'll hide the boat where no one can find it."

No one objected to this proposition. In fact the boys were only too delighted at the thought of taking refuge in such a safe place, which was separated from the nearest shore by three quarters of a mile of water. Besides, they had long wished to explore the island.

Gunny Tucker hid his pack in the alder thicket, and hurried up the pond. In less than half an hour he paddled down to the camp in a small, rudely built flat boat, which looked to be several decades old. It was a quarter full of water when he landed, but he soon plugged up the worst of the leaks.

Five persons in addition to Sirloin and the luggage sank the shallow craft nearly to the gunwales, and made it necessary to sit very still. Gunny paddled with slow and cautious strokes, and kept two of the boys constantly bailing out the water which persistently filtered through the bottom boards.

The island was reached without accident, and as the boat scraped gently on the beach Sirloin and the boys sprang out.

"I'd keep close under the trees if I were you," said Gunny Tucker, "and don't on no account make a fire, else it might be seen by them sharp eyed comrades of mine."

Tossing a pair of blankets and a paper of biscuits out on the stones he headed the boat around, and paddled with swift strokes for the shore.

The boys were speechless with surprise, and before they could utter a word of protest the boat was a dozen yards away.

"Hold on there," cried the Admiral, "we want the rest of our things."

His companions chimed in loudly, but Gunny Tucker merely paddled the faster.

"Can't stop now," he shouted. "Didn't you hear that gun shot over in the woods? Some of the gang are comin' this way, an' if I turn back it'll be all up with us. I've got to reach shore an' hide the boat as quick as possible. Lie low an' don't make

no noise. You'll get your traps when I come back in the morning."

He waved his hand in farewell, and then paddled on as desperately as though his very life depended on the effort.

Though the boys had heard no report of a firearm, they believed Gunny's statement, and their first impulse led them to take shelter among the trees. They watched the boat until it vanished in the purple haze that shrouded the brink of the pond, and when an hour of unbroken silence had gone by they ventured out from their hiding place.

"I hope those robbers won't find the boat," said Arthur. "It would be hard luck to lose our blankets and provisions, and all our extra clothes."

"And our fishing rods and tackle, and reels," added Terry.

"It may have been only a false alarm," suggested Pres, "or else the robbers turned off in some other direction. I guess Gunny is two or three miles away by this time."

"Well, I'd give a good deal to know just where he is," exclaimed the Admiral. "There's something mighty suspicious about this affair. It's funny *we* didn't hear any gun shot; and anyhow it would have been the safest plan for Gunny Tucker to have turned back to the island instead of paddling straight across the pond, where he could be easily seen. I'll tell you what it is, fellows: I believe Gunny Tucker has stolen all our traps, and gone back to his own band. He's a low, cowardly traitor."

The Admiral's denunciation brought angry and incredulous looks to the faces of his companions, who were at first loath to believe such a startling theory. Yet circumstances pointed that way, and left but little room for doubt.

The boys bitterly reproached themselves when they realized how carelessly and stupidly they had fallen into the trap—if such it was. A discussion of the situation led to high words; for Arthur, who was heartily sick of playing robber by this time, unreasonably tried to saddle the blame of the escapade upon his companions, who indignantly resented it, of course.

"Don't say that again," exclaimed Terry wrathfully. "It was all your scheme, and you can't deny it. Just when we had everything fixed to go camping up the creek you had to come along and coax us to form a band of robbers. I'll leave it to the other fellows if we didn't hold out the longest while."

"That's right," spoke up Pres. "He and his old bandits of the Sierras did it."

"We're all to blame alike, then," doggedly persisted Arthur. "You fellows were willing enough to listen to me."

"That'll do now," interrupted the Admiral, in tones of authority. "What's the use of crying over spilt milk? We've tumbled into a bad scrape, and we've got to make the best of it. You fellows are pretty bandits, I must say. Here you are trying to

back out, instead of making a noble effort to retrieve your shattered fortunes. I blush for you."

The latter part of this speech was purloined from the "Bandits of the Sierras," though the Admiral did not think it necessary to so state.

"You can blush all you want to," grumbled Arthur. "That don't help any. It's not that we've lost our traps, but ten to one Gunny Tucker will deliver that letter tonight, and take the money out of the button-wood tree in the morning. No wonder he was anxious to get us safely penned on this island. And one thing sure, father can't be bled a second time. It don't look much like retrievin' our shattered fortunes now, does it?"

The Admiral was staggered, and his heroic bearing wilted. This was a phase of the situation that had not occurred to him before.

"Things look pretty blue," he admitted.

"I guess that's just what Gunny Tucker will do with the letter. The worst of it is, our being cooped up here like regular castaways. How are we going to keep warm tonight with two blankets, and how long will that handful of biscuits last us? It's too far to swim to shore, so we'll have to stay here till some one comes to rescue us."

"We'll starve long before that," whimpered Arthur, with tears in his eyes. "Our folks won't think of looking here for us."

"Not until they've hunted us up the creek, any way," added Terry.

There was silence for a minute or two. The boys sat gloomily on the beach, picturing to themselves how in years to come some chance visitor to the island would find their bones, and would spread to the world the secret of their disappearance.

"In seems to me," remarked the Admiral finally, "that we're in too big a hurry to believe the worst. It's just possible that Gunny Tucker was acting on the square, and means to come back. Morning will tell, any way."

Now the Admiral really thought otherwise, but spoke thus from a laudable desire to cheer his companions. He did cheer them, too. They boys caught eagerly at the suggestion, and confidently discussed it until they were in hopeful spirits again.

As the sun had now vanished in a bank of clouds overhanging the horizon they did not think it necessary to hide any longer. It was unlikely that they could be seen from the mainland. They divided the scanty supply of biscuits into four equal shares, and ate them with a relish, not forgetting to toss an occasional one to Sir-loin.

The brief interval of daylight that remained was spent in exploring the island, which was about thirty yards long by half that in width. It was fringed by a pebbly beach that sloped upward to a patch of soil, on which were a dozen stunted pine

trees, and a few clumps of rock. It was destitute of bird or animal life, and did not contain a single good spot for camping.

"We're worse off than Robinson Crusoe was," complained Arthur. "His island was big, and full of game, and he had plenty to eat and a cave to sleep in."

"We needn't be afraid of cannibals, any way," replied Pres.

"There have been Indians here, though," exclaimed Terry, as he snatched at an arrowhead of white quartz which was lying among the stones.

Terry's luck started the boys on a hunt for similar treasures. They persevered until twilight, finding a number of chips, but no more perfect specimens.

When it grew so dark that they could see but a short distance out on the pond they crawled into a hollow between two big rocks, and sat there for several hours discussing the chances of Gunny Tucker's return. Hunger and loneliness made them despondent, and had they been on the main shore they would gladly have forsaken their ambitious plans, and returned penitently home without delay. They were afraid to build a fire, and happily one was not needed.

The weather had been usually fine for September, and tonight the air was even sultry and oppressive, with not a touch of autumn's chilliness.

That this portended a storm did not occur to the boys, for the stars were shining overhead. They felt drowsy after a while, and when they had gathered enough pine boughs to make a soft bed, they huddled close together under the two blankets, leaving Sirloin on guard at the mouth of the hollow.

Sirloin's brute sense told him that no danger was to be apprehended in such an isolated spot, so he calmly fell asleep to dream of cats and juicy bones.

III.

The night wore on, and while the castaways slumbered, great masses of inky black clouds began to roll up from the northwest. They mounted higher and higher, spreading in both directions along the horizon, and eclipsing star after star. Thunder muttered in the distance, and purple flashes played behind the hilltops.

Sirloin hated storms, and when a vivid flash of lightning came he ran in between the rocks and trampled clumsily over the boys until they got awake. They were angry at first, but a rattling peal of thunder soon told them what was amiss, and brought them scrambling out of their shelter and down to the beach.

"Of all the hard luck!" exclaimed the Admiral. "You fellows know what a September thunder gust is likely to be, and here comes one now. The whole force of it will strike the island, and we'll be lucky if we escape with a drenching."

"We'd better get in among the trees,"

cried Terry. "The rocks won't keep the rain off."

Arthur ran back for the blankets, and returned with one under each arm.

"I'm not afraid," he said, "I've often been out in storms."

"Just wait until you see this one," retorted the Admiral. "Here it comes, boys."

As yet the air had been so deadly still that not a bough of the pine trees was stirred, but now a lively breeze suddenly sprang up, ruffling the surface of the pond in great patches. Then the full force of the gale broke through the hill gaps, and in an instant the trees were swaying and groaning, and white capped waves were dashing on the beach. The boys crouched behind a rock, fearful of being blown off their feet. At intervals, above the steady roar of the tempest, was heard a sullen thud as some great tree crashed to earth over on the mainland.

When the first big drops fell the boys ran for the clump of timber, and just as they reached it the rain came down in drenching sheets. They huddled in a bunch under the drooping branches, and with the aid of the blankets they managed to keep dry for a while.

Clouds now hid the entire sky, and the storm showed no signs of abating. The thunder and lightning were terrific, and the wind blew like a hurricane, driving the rain everywhere.

The boys were badly frightened, and trembled at each peal of thunder. They knew they were in a dangerous place, and yet no other shelter was available. The water leaked down on them through the branches, and soaked them to the skin in spots. Sirloin whined and whimpered, and tried to wriggle in between their feet.

All at once a terrific gale of wind snatched away one of the blankets, and by the brief glare of a jagged lightning flash the boys saw it whirling over the crests of the raging waves. A moment later one of the very trees under which they were crouched was blown down with a tremendous crash. They narrowly escaped the heavy trunk, but were sharply struck by the limbs and pelted with dirt and stones thrown up by the roots.

This was too much for the boys' courage. Fearing that another tree would fall, they scrambled out into the storm with cries of fright.

They could scarcely keep their feet on the beach, and the gale quickly wrested the second blanket from their hands. They stumbled blindly about for a moment, and then fled to the hollow between the rocks, where they found shelter from the wind, if not from the rain. That mattered little, for they were already soaked to the skin from head to foot.

What a storm that was! With the exception of a few brief lulls, it raged for nearly three hours, and all that time the boys lay between the rocks, exposed to the

pitiless rain, and terrified by the constant claps of thunder. Sleep was out of the question, and it did not lessen their misery any to remember that their own wrong doing was responsible for what they were now suffering.

Each hour seemed like ten, but at last the wind died away, and after one more heavy shower the rain also ceased. Shivering with cold, the boys crawled out from their shelter, and stretched their cramped limbs along the beach, where the foamy waves were still breaking. The Admiral had a waterproof match safe in his pocket, but as every stick and blade of grass on the island was soaking wet, there was no chance of lighting a fire.

"Morning can't be far off, fellows," he said. "We'll have to keep warm until then by walking about. It's the only way."

This was not a pleasant prospect, but the boys faced it stoutly. After wringing the water from their clothes as thoroughly as possible, they tramped up and down the island for more than an hour, and by varying this programme with an occasional race or a climb over the rocks, they kept the blood warm in their veins.

Just before dawn the clouds broke and rolled away, and when the sun finally came gleaming above the hill tops, it was hard to believe that such a storm had raged during the night. The waters of the pond were smooth and serene, and the air was as warm and balmy as on a June morning.

The boys stretched themselves on the pebbles in the full rays of the sun, and stayed there patiently for several hours until their damp clothes were thoroughly dried. Then their captivity grew irksome, and they walked restlessly about, noting the sun's upward progress, and keeping a close watch on the shore of the pond, where there was a slim chance of Gunny Tucker making his appearance.

For the first time in their lives they realized what it was to suffer the pangs of extreme hunger, and the prospect of dying by starvation—which seemed far from remote—made them desperately anxious to escape.

When the sun reached the meridian the last ray of faith in Gunny Tucker's promises vanished from the hearts of the young castaways, and they no longer tried to keep up any semblance of hope.

"If he had intended coming back he would be here by this time," said Arthur bitterly. "It's easy to see that he has tricked us, and unless we want to starve to death we've got to find some way of escape from this desert island."

"Well, I'd like to know how we're going to do it," replied Terry. "I feel as weak as a cat, and if the shore was only twenty yards away I don't believe I could swim to it. It's awful to be hungry. If I had a fortune I'd give every cent of it this minute for a couple of sandwiches."

The mention of sandwiches positively pained the boys, and three pair of eyes looked reproachfully at Terry.

"Couldn't we build a raft?" suggested Pres.

"What with?" asked Arthur scornfully.

"There isn't a stick on the island except those trees, and four of us together could not even budge the one that the storm knocked down. If we had a couple of axes there might be some sense in talking about a raft."

"If Sirloin was a good swimmer," remarked Terry, after a pause, "we could tie a note around his neck, and make him carry it home. Dogs have often done that."

As Sirloin was known to have a mortal antipathy to water, this suggestion was received without comment, and a mournful silence settled on the little group.

The Admiral had taken no part in the foregoing conversation. In fact it is doubtful if he heard it, since his gaze was roaming abstractedly across the glistening stretch of water to the distant shore of the pond. Now his face suddenly lighted up with an eager expression, and turning to his companions he blurted out:

"Hurrah! Fellows, I've got a scheme, and if it works, as I think it will, we won't be prisoners much longer. Do you see that?"

He pointed to a log, probably half a dozen feet long, that was resting on the water some fifty yards from the island. It had no doubt drifted out from the northwest shore in the teeth of the gale.

"What about it? What are you going to do?" inquired the boys eagerly.

"I'll show you," replied the Admiral, as he began stripping off his clothes with the utmost haste. "Just watch me cross the pond and bring that boat over here."

"Don't try it," Arthur warned him. "That log won't bear you."

"It's too big a risk," cried Terry. "You can't swim out there in such cold water."

"A baby could swim that distance," confidently replied the Admiral, "and any way the water is warm after all the rain. As for the log bearing me—why, just wait and see."

He shivered a little as he ran down the sloping beach, laughing at the continued remonstrances of his companions. He waded gingerly out until the water came to his waist; then, clasping his hands, he dived forward.

"Hurrah! it's warm as toast," he cried, as he bobbed to the surface, splashing and kicking. "Now for a glorious swim."

Turning on his side he started out for the log with rapid strokes. The boys watched him with rapt anxiety, as did also Sirloin, who showed concern for his young master's safety by running to the water's edge and barking shrilly.

But the Admiral was in no danger. With easy strokes he gained the log and strad-

dled it. His weight caused the one end to sink slightly, and threw the other end correspondingly out of water.

"Good by, boys," he cried, turning to wave his arm triumphantly, and as their applauding shouts rang back he began to paddle with both hands, driving the log slowly toward the distant shore of the pond.

In spite of cold and aching muscles he worked steadily on, steering in a line with the Indian Path. Nearer and nearer came the green hillsides, and when at last the shore was but a dozen yards away he impatiently rolled off the log and swam the remainder of the distance.

As he waded through the shallows he glanced back at the island, where the figures of his companions were dimly visible. The air was chilly, and after jumping about in the sunshine for a little while to get his blood in circulation he ran along the shore of the pond looking for the boat.

He had no expectation of finding what he sought immediately, for he was satisfied that Gunny Tucker had concealed the craft in some out of the way nook. But the moment he came out of the bushes on the open space in front of the lean-to, he saw the boat pulled carelessly up on the grass. The paddle lay near by, but of the camping traps not a trace could be seen.

At first the Admiral was puzzled, but a little reflection cast light upon the apparent mystery.

"This only goes to prove that Gunny Tucker is a rascal," he muttered. "He either gave up the idea of getting the money and was satisfied to sneak off with our things, or else he hid them somewhere with the intention of stopping for them on his way back from the village. If he did *that* he probably came by here hours ago, and has gone on to join his band. I'll just take a peep around though, to make sure."

The "peep around" included every clump of bushes for fifty yards up and down the shore and an equal distance back in the ravine, but it failed to locate the missing traps.

By this time the Admiral was numb with cold, so he mournfully abandoned the search and returned to the boat. He tilted the rain water out of it, and dragged it into the pond.

He paddled hard and fast to keep warm, and in less than twenty minutes he landed on the island amid cheers and congratulations from the boys.

That was a proud and happy moment for the Admiral. He realized that his prestige and title were now infinitely beyond reach of Arthur's rivalry.

He hurriedly pulled on his clothes while he told graphically of his long, cold swim across the pond, and the discovery of the empty boat.

"It was an awfully brave thing to do," said Pres. "You saved our lives, for we would surely have starved to death here."

"That's so," assented Terry, while Arthur added gravely: "You ought to have the Victoria Cross. That's what the English soldiers get, you know, for doing brave things."

The Admiral accepted these tributes blushing.

"It was nothing to make a fuss about," he said. "But now we must see about getting something to eat. Every minute we stand talking we are getting weaker and hungrier. Let's cross the pond and make another search for those things. If we don't find them I know where I dropped a fishing line and hooks in the corner of the lean-to, and we can catch some fish and cook them. Then it will be time enough to talk about our plans and how to get out of the scrape. If it comes to the worst we can tramp home tonight."

The Admiral's little speech put his companions into a more hopeful and cheerful humor, and their faces brightened.

They crossed the pond, and pulled the boat out on the very spot where the Admiral had found it.

As they stood for a moment, planning where to search for their stolen property, Sirloin uttered a low, warning growl. The boys instantly ceased talking, and in the dead silence that followed they heard footsteps and voices beyond the mouth of the densely wooded ravine.

There first thought was that Gunny Tucker was coming at the head of his bloodthirsty band of robbers.

The Admiral's presence of mind averted a panic.

"Don't run," he whispered, "or we will surely be caught. Get out of sight in the bushes, quick!"

There was no time to be particular. The boys dived into the nearest thicket, and crouched flat amid weeds and briars. The Admiral grabbed Sirloin by the jaws and the collar, and forced him down by his side.

Through the leafy crevices every eye watched the mouth of the ravine. Steadily nearer came the tramping feet, and when Gunny Tucker marched jauntily out on the open turf the boys breathed hard, and the Admiral had to choke Sirloin to keep him quiet.

But a second or two later their alarm turned to amazement and anger. Close at the peddler's heels came a string of familiar faces. Arthur's father was there, and Mr. Watson, and Mr. Dagget, and Bill Marling, the village constable, and old Sammy Barlow—all armed with guns, and all looking very grim and resolute.

They halted in a group near the lean-to, and the hidden boys listened anxiously for some clue that would tell what this amazing thing meant.

"Well, I've kept my word, gentlemen," exclaimed Gunny Tucker. "Here lies the boat jest whar I put it, an' over on yonder island you'll find the lad an' the rascal what

kidnapped him. You can't see 'em because they're hid among the rocks. If you want more proof why there's the shanty what they slep' under the first night."

The men glanced at the boat and the lean-to, and then turned their gaze on the island. Mr. Hamilton took a pair of field glasses from a case, and lengthened them to get the proper range.

"If you ain't got no objections I'll take the fifty dollars now," resumed Gunny Tucker uneasily. "I've done my part accordin' to agreement, an' I want ter pull out o' here afore that pardner of mine knows I've played him false. I don't purpose to let him lay eyes on me again if I kin help it."

Mr. Hamilton put one hand into his pocket, but changed his mind and withdrew it empty. Raising the glasses to his eyes he took a survey of the island.

"Very strange!" he muttered. "I don't see a soul there."

"Don't I tell you they're hidin' behind the rocks," persisted Gunny Tucker. "It ain't likely they'd be sittin' out in the hot sun."

"Ah! possibly that is the case," replied Mr. Hamilton.

He lowered the glasses and drew a fat roll of bank notes from his pocket. Gunny Tucker's eyes sparkled, and he extended his hand.

There was a brief pause as Mr. Hamilton separated two or three bills from the lot, and the indignant boys knew that their time had come. They were too eager to expose the lying peddler to think of consequences to themselves. With one accord they scrambled to their feet, and burst from the thicket.

It was a genuine surprise party all around. Mr. Hamilton stuffed the bank notes into his pocket, and clasped Arthur in a fervent embrace. The fathers of Pres and Terry stared at the lads in speechless amazement, hardly able to credit their own senses.

Gunny Tucker turned half a dozen colors, and fled up the ravine at such prodigious speed that he was out of sight before a single gun could be lifted to stop him.

The interest in the peddler's escape was only temporary, for deeper mysteries awaited explanation. Mr. Hamilton had some very pertinent questions to ask of Arthur, while Mr. Daggett and Mr. Walton sternly demanded of *their* sons how they came to be at Muskrat Pond when they had started on a camping tour up the Sweet Arrow.

Well, the whole story had to come out, of course, and by dint of much cross examination and persistent questioning it was finally told from beginning to end.

Arthur admitted the lion's share of the responsibility, and the Admiral also claimed a part. There were tearful confessions and pleadings for pardon all around, but the parents were as yet too

angry and indignant to feel in a relenting mood.

"I hope this will teach you boys a lesson," said Mr. Hamilton. "Just see what alarm and trouble you have caused me. I did not dream of connecting you with Arthur's disappearance, since he was not with you when you were seen to cross the river toward the creek. I had been scouring the country with these gentlemen all night, and when I returned home this morning I found that rascally peddler waiting for me. He told a plausible story of how Arthur had been kidnapped by a fellow peddler for the purpose of extorting money from me, and how he had accidentally met them, and been offered a share in the profits. He said that he pretended to agree to this, and that after getting them in a safe place, he slipped away on the pretence of coming to see me about the ransom money. He offered, for the sum of fifty dollars, to guide me to a place where I could both rescue Arthur and capture the kidnapper. I suspected him to be concerned in the affair, but anxiety for my son led me to accept his proposition. I at once got a party together, and we drove to within three miles of here, walking the rest of the way. I would gladly give fifty dollars to have the rascal a prisoner, but I fear that he is beyond reach, and that your possessions are gone as well."

The story made the whole thing clear to the boys, and they wondered more than ever at their stupidity. They had to stand a good deal of ridicule—especially for swallowing the peddler's absurd story about the gang of robbers.

"I—I wonder why he didn't save so much trouble by delivering that letter," Arthur ventured to say.

"He knew better," replied Mr. Hamilton. "I am sorry that remarkable document did not come into my possession. I think I should have known what to do." He glanced meaningly at the boys, and then added: "We will postpone the settlement of this painful affair until another time. It is past five o'clock, and we must start homeward."

Two hours later the party drove into the village, and the boys forgot their troubles in a hearty supper and a good night's sleep.

The next morning the constable and several others went back to Muskrat Pond, and searched vainly for Gunny Tucker and the stolen property. The peddler had escaped with his booty, and was never heard of again in *that* vicinity.

Mr. Hamilton came to the conclusion that his son was mainly to blame for the escapade. He promptly sent Arthur off to boarding school, and interceded so warmly in behalf of the other boys that their parents let them off with a severe reprimand. But for months they were the laughing stock of the village—a severe punishment in itself.

A CHRISTMAS CAPTURE.

By Matthew White, Jr.



WALTER OLIPHANT must have been born under an unlucky star. He was always doing the wrong thing, not intentionally, for no fellow ever tried harder to be just right in everything.

But it did seem as if the harder he tried, the more persistently he failed.

At school he was the scapegoat for all the misdemeanors of the other boys. He was always studying so hard, and looked so innocent, when anything went wrong, that the astute teacher at once decided it to be the cloak of the culprit, and punished him accordingly.

But Walter was invariably good natured through all these buffetings of fate, and his circle of friends was in nowise diminished by his tendency to hoodoo things.

"If he can stand it so nicely," Earl Granger remarked, "we ought not to worry. And Walter certainly is the best hearted fellow I ever met."

Thus it came to pass that Walter was the only outsider invited to join the Trident Yacht Club's Christmas reunion in Florida.

Earl's father was president of one of the Southern railroads, and this is how Earl came to think of the idea of going a yachting during the Christmas holidays. Of course he had to plan for it a long time ahead, so that the Speedwell, Earl's yacht, could be sent down to St. Augustine before the autumn storms set in.

Earl was commodore of the club, and the rest were pretty apt to think as he did, so, as he was to bear all the expenses of the trip, there was not much time lost in getting acceptances from the half dozen New York and Brooklyn boys who made up the rank and file of the Trident.

The Speedwell was the largest of the Trident fleet—a schooner carrying a crew of twelve, and easily accommodating the entire club.

Mr. Granger's private car Modena was placed at the disposal of the party, and attached to the limited Washington express leaving Jersey City two days before

Christmas. Of course Walter Oliphant would be late; at least so all the rest of the fellows supposed. As a matter of fact he was early—a whole day.

With the perversity for blundering for which he was distinguished, he read Earl's letter wrong, and came on from New Haven, where he was a Yale freshman, on the 22d instead of the 23d. He went straight to Jersey City, where he had barely time to catch the limited, which started before he discovered that the Granger car was not attached to it.

Even then he did not realize that he was too early. Imagining the reverse to be the case, and that his friends were a day ahead of him, he paid his fair to St. Augustine out of his own pocket, and kept fretting all the way over the annoyance his tardiness might cause the other Trident boys.

Arrived in Florida, he inquired where he could find the Speedwell, and had himself at once rowed out to her.

As he drew near the side of the handsome craft, he wondered a little that he did not hear Harry Vick's banjo, or Syd Morton's mandolin. It was early evening, and this was usually the time the fellows devoted to music when on board.

Walter had another surprise when he dismissed his boatman, and mounted the starboard gangway to the deck. He did not recognize any of the crew. Then he recollected Earl telling him that Captain Henry had been hired by one of the Goelets to take a party up the Mediterranean.

"Who's captain now?" he asked one of the sailors, who came forward to take his valise.

"Captain Nelson, sir," was the reply.

"Oh. Are the fellows all ashore?"

"Yes, sir. They went directly after supper."

"Are they coming back soon?"

"I believe not, sir. I heard them telling captain they'd be late, and not to send the boat till midnight."

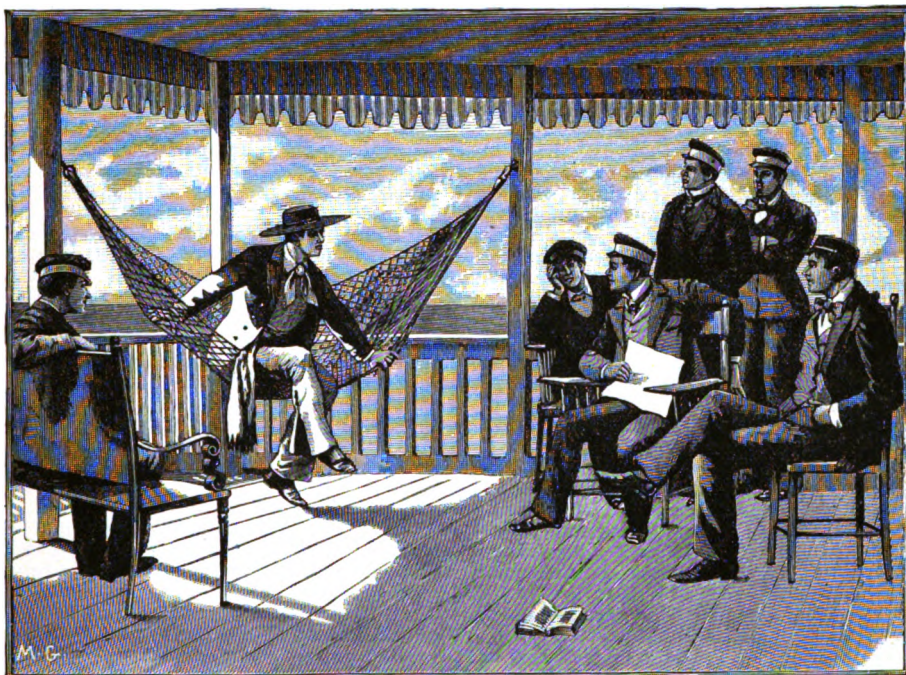
"Gone to a dance somewhere, I suppose," mused Walter, "but as I don't know where, there's no use of my trying to hunt them up. Besides, I'm worn out. I'll turn in and surprise the fellows by turning out to breakfast with them in the morning. S'pose I'll have my old room. And say, don't you mention my coming to my friends."

"No, sir," and the man touched his cap as he picked up Walter's dress suit case.

Walter got ready for bed at once, and was so worn out with his long journey that he slept far into the morning. Then he was awakened by the tossing of the yacht, showing that she had put to sea.

"I suppose the rest of the fellows are up on deck. But never mind; I guess I can eat without waiting for an introduction."

He sat down and began his breakfast. The other fellows looked at him, and then at one another, with expressions that varied all the way from disgust to amusement.



Walter's story was listened to with the most incredulous attention.

"Lucky I got here when I did," Walter soliloquized as he dressed. "The fellows had evidently given me up and made up their minds not to wait any longer. Won't they have a start when they see me."

He could hear the clink of dishes in the saloon and knew that there were at least some of the boys still at breakfast. Walter hurried into his clothes and flinging open the door, stepped into view, with the exclamation:

"Well, you didn't get rid of me as easily as you expected to, did——"

He got no further, for as his glance roved from one to the other of the three seated at the table he saw that they were all strangers to him. What is more, they were all much older than any members of the Trident Club. Nor were they dressed in the natty uniform of the club.

But Trident boys or not, it was evident that they were as much surprised to see Walter as he expected they would be.

Walter was dazed for an instant. Then he thought he understood matters and remarked:

"They had about finished eating when Walter appeared, and now all three rose from the table and went on deck."

"Funny chaps," Walter mused. "Wonder where the boys picked them up. Don't seem at all our kind. I s'pose they'll send Earl down to me now."

But nobody appeared, and finally Walter went on deck himself. The Speedwell was scudding along before a spanking breeze, and land was nowhere in sight.

What was more to the purpose, so far as Walter was concerned, not one of the Trident half dozen was in sight either.

"Well, this is queer!" reflected Walter.

And for the first time he began to suspect that something might be amiss. His first impulse was to go up to one of the three men he had seen at the breakfast table and demand to know where his friends were. He saw them standing in a knot by the foremast earnestly conversing.

He started to go forward and join them, then he hesitated. He recalled his fatal capacity for blundering, and warned himself to be careful.

He turned on his heel, and walking astern, stood for a while gazing at the wake of the *Speedwell*, trying to make up his mind what to do.

"I believe those fellows have stolen the yacht," he reflected, "though how they could do so right under the noses of our boys is more than I can comprehend."

For it must be remembered that Walter was still under the impression that he was a day late, and that consequently his friends, not being on board, must be in *St. Augustine*.

"They think I'm quite ignorant of this yet," he went on to himself. "And of course if I raise a row about it, it'll be all day with me. I can't hope to do anything against three of them, with the whole crew to back them. Wonder where they're going."

Walter's first impulse was to turn and put this question to the man at the wheel, but then he recalled that it might arouse suspicion.

"I must be mighty careful. What a feat it would be if I could recapture the yacht single handed. The fellows won't think me such a fool—"

He stopped short in this line of reflection, seized with a sudden idea.

"I wonder if I could carry it out consistently. According to some of the chaps I oughtn't to find much difficulty in doing the thing," and he laughed, though not very merrily. "Then he pulled himself together for action, as one of the three men came up and addressed him.

"You haven't found your friends on deck, have you?" he said significantly.

"Oh, yes, I have," answered Walter, with a smile. "There are my friends up there"—pointing to some fleecy clouds floating in the blue overhead—"and here are some more, all around us"—indicating the white caps on the waves.

The man stared curiously at the fellow who talked such jargon, but Walter continued to smile and wave his hands about.

"I sprung myself on you like a thief in the night, didn't I?" he went on, thinking a pause was dangerous. "You weren't expecting me, were you?"

"Not exactly. Who are you, any way?"

"Listen, and I'll whisper," returned Walter, lowering his voice impressively. "I'm Walter Periwinkle, and I escaped from—well, perhaps I'd better not tell you. You might want to take me back. Are you sure you won't do that?"

"No; we'll look out for you all right," replied the other good naturedly. "How came you to get away?"

"Because I wanted to get out on this yacht," Walter answered. "They haven't been watching me very close just lately; there's a real wild chap they have to give a lot of time to. But wasn't it funny I should expect to see my friends down in the cabin there, when there wasn't any way for them to get in?"

And once more Walter looked leeringly at the clouds and the wave caps. He wanted to look at the yacht stealer, too, to note how his plan was working, but he didn't dare.

He turned abruptly and went down the companionway to his stateroom. He felt that he must have a little rest and an opportunity to think of fresh features for the part he was playing. But he took care that the key of the door was on the inside.

Meantime on deck the three men were holding an earnest conversation.

"What do you make out of him, Scott?" asked one of the two who had lingered forward. "Do you suppose he suspects?"

"Suspect!" exclaimed Scott. "He is a fool," and he tapped his forehead with his forefinger.

"Umph! Are you sure of that, Scott?" asked Tower cautiously. "He may be playing it off on us. I made sure he was one of the young men from New York."

"How can that be," returned Scott, "when we know that they would not arrive till today? It isn't likely that one would come ahead of the others, all that way."

"That's true, Tower," interposed Morling. "Besides, he hasn't made any fuss. But we can pitch him overboard, if you like."

Tower shrugged his shoulders.

"It isn't worth the pains," he said, "if what Scott tells us is true. We'll watch him, though, and at the first sign of false playing, we can easily take care of him."

"But what do we do with him when we get to Havana?" Morling wanted to know.

"Let him go ashore and then—" Scott went through the motions of washing his hands. "What do we care? We sell the yacht and return to Florida no more. Don't let us worry ourselves over him. It will take all our thinking to make the parties who buy the boat not suspect how we got her."

Walter would have been much relieved if he could have overheard this conversation. But not a word of it reached his ears. He was therefore compelled to go ahead with his scheme without knowing whether he was succeeding or not.

"They may be going to Europe," he said to himself disconsolately. "Think of my having to play the escaped idiot all that while! But maybe I can recapture the yacht before many more hours slip by, if I manage things right."

At the lunch table all three of the men watched him closely, so he pretended to be hungry, and spoke scarcely at all. But he did not try to avoid the others' eyes.

When the meal was over the men lighted their cigarettes and lolled lazily on the deck, under the awning which Scott had ordered stretched. While they were gone, Walter took the opportunity to inspect the doors leading into the cabin from the various staterooms.

As he hoped, the keys were all in the locks, and on the outside.

"My opportunity will come tonight," he decided. "I suppose the fellows are just about wild. But what a triumph if I can only take the Speedwell back to them! I wouldn't ask for any better Christmas present."

This reflection reminded him, as darkness fell, that it was Christmas Eve, the strangest one he had ever passed in his life. What would the morrow bring forth?

At dinner Scott was in a merry mood, and began questioning Walter about his life in the insane asylum at a rate that taxed the poor youth's powers of invention to the utmost. At last he sought refuge in an exhibition of a phase of his assumed weakness, and only laughed idiotically when the questions were put. But instead of offending, this appeared to put the men in still better humor, and long after Walter had gone to his room he could hear peals of laughter and the clink of glasses.

And now began the vigil that was to test his ability to recapture the yacht. Could he keep awake till after they had gone to bed? For he knew that should he once fall asleep there was slim chance of his waking before morning.

He had nothing to read, and finally he became so reduced for devices to keep from sinking into slumber that he was forced to drop water on his eyelids. Poor Walter; he really suffered torture that night before Christmas, to which he had looked forward so eagerly for the past four months.

But at last, considerably after midnight, quiet descended upon the cabin, and after waiting a discreet time, Walter stole out, and turned the key in the staterooms occupied by the three men. He could hear heavy breathing in each one, so that in every case he knew he had his man secure.

Having been on the Speedwell so many times, he knew just where the captain slept, and was soon knocking on his door.

"Who's there? What is the matter?" exclaimed that worthy, jumping out of bed with the alacrity of one who holds himself in readiness to act in emergencies.

"Hush!" answered Walter, as the door was opened. "Those three men have stolen this yacht. I don't know what sort of a story they told you, but such is the fact. I have the three scoundrels locked in their rooms, so there is nothing to interfere with your taking the yacht straight back to St. Augustine. Where are you bound with her any way?"

"To Havana," replied the captain; adding: "But how do I know you are any more entitled to command me than those three young men? They brought me an order from Mr. Earl Granger, announcing that he had gone to Cuba by steam, and

that I was to take their three friends to join him there."

"The letter was forged. Did you ever see Mr. Earl's signature before?"

"No, only his father's. But it was written on the paper of the railroad company, so of course I thought it was all right."

"Pshaw; a sheet of that is easy enough to get. Now are you satisfied?"

"All right, sir. I'll be up on deck in five minutes."

Walter was sleepy no longer, but as soon as the course was changed, and the Speedwell headed back to Florida, he went to bed.

He was awakened on this memorable Christmas Day by a tremendous pounding on the door of Scott's stateroom; a noise which was soon reinforced by similar assaults upon the portals of the rooms occupied by Morling and Tower.

Walter dressed hastily, and obtained from Captain Melton six sailors to guard the prisoners while one by one their breakfast was handed in to them.

They were exceedingly wrathful, and made the most horrible threats. Walter's blood ran cold more than once as he listened to them, but the Speedwell had a fair wind, and was rapidly drawing near to St. Augustine again.

She arrived there before Christmas was over, and leaving his captives still on board but carrying the keys of their jail in his pocket, Walter had himself rowed ashore. He went at once to a small hotel near the water of which he had heard Earl speak once, and discovered the six members of the Trident Club sitting on the piazza.

"Where have you been with my boat?" Earl called out to him.

"I've just recaptured it for you," replied Walter.

He vaulted over the railing, and after greeting each of his friends, seated himself in the hammock and told his story. It was listened to with the most incredulous attention. The Tridents had had no suspicion of anything of the sort. They knew that Walter had come on ahead of them, supposed he had gone for a sail, and with his usual faculty for getting into trouble had managed either to wreck the Speedwell or run her aground.

When they learned the true state of affairs, Walter at once became a hero in their eyes, and was unanimously elected a member of the club even though he owned not so much as a mud scow.

The prisoners were removed to jail in ample time to permit the Trident boys to eat their Christmas dinner aboard without being disturbed by unpleasant neighbors.

And now the charter members of the Trident Club instantly resent any one saying that Walter Oliphant has a fine capacity for bungling, and tell the story of his Christmas capture to disprove the assertion.

THE SUN GOD'S SECRET.

By William Murray Graydon,

Author of "Under Africa," "The Rajah's Fortress," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE FLAT PAPER PACKAGE.

SOME years ago, when I was seventeen or thereabouts, I had the good fortune to meet and become intimately acquainted with a famous and daring explorer, a man who had tracked the elephant and the buffalo in Africa, hunted the wild yak in Upper Thibet, killed kangaroos in Australia, ascended the cataracts of the Nile,

traveled on horseback along the great wall of China, and explored the Grand Canyon of the Colorado—not to speak of numerous other exploits equally thrilling.

"Why don't you stay at home now, and stop risking your life?" I ventured to ask him one day when he was planning out another perilous expedition. "Don't you get weary of danger?"

The great man turned from his maps and looked at me with a patronizing smile.



The fellow turned on me with a savage cry.

"Ah, my lad," he replied, half sadly, "I often wish that I could be content with civilization as other men are. The first taste of adventure is like the flavor of wine to a man who has inherited a fondness for liquor. One craves incessantly for more, and will be content with nothing less. I have been a rover for twenty years and will be till the end. Remember that, my boy, and be warned in time."

These words may be aptly repeated at this time, when I am about to narrate as strange and thrilling a tale of adventure as ever fell to the lot of man. The advice of my early friend was taken seriously to heart, but in spite of this I drifted almost unconsciously—as many a drunkard does—into a career that I rather dreaded than otherwise, and I realized, when it was too late, that the mischief was done.

My name is Melton Forbes—some of my readers have heard it before. I am an Englishman by birth, and by profession a journalist, a war correspondent, an adventurer—anything you please.

At the time the story opens, the month of April, 1890, I was twenty nine years of age, and had recently returned to England after passing through a succession of perils so deadly that the peaceful security of civilization was intensely welcome to me—for a time, at least.

My last exploit had made me in a way famous. Myself and a handful of companions were captured in the Somali revolt against Berbera, and carried far into Central Africa, whence we made our escape by traveling a thousand miles down an underground river to the coast.

Previous to that I had been with the British forces in Burma, where I risked my life a hundred times in tracking a celebrated robber to his jungle lair.

When I came back to England I really felt a loathing for adventure, and determined to lead quite different life in the future.

I still remained on the staff of the London paper, with which I had been connected for some years past, and wrote for it occasional articles on special topics, refusing to listen to the management when they proposed to send me to South Africa or to Mandalay in Upper Burma.

I had conceived a pet scheme of my own, which I was anxious to carry out. This was the compiling, in book form, of a series of sketches on "Famous Refugees."

Leicester Square has been for years past, and will be for years to come, the abiding place of shady foreigners. The adjacent streets where thrive restaurants and cafés unnumbered, that boast of every form of Continental cookery, abound with odd and interesting types of humanity.

In this locality I lived for a month or two, making by slow degrees a circle of acquaintances, from whom I gleaned the bulk of the information that I sought, and early in April my work was finished, with the exception of two or three sketches.

On a certain spring morning I took an omnibus down into the city to have a draft cashed at the Bank of England. I had transacted my business, and was standing aside near the door, counting over the money that had just been given me, when my attention was attracted by two persons who were leaning against the wall a few yards away, deep in a whispered conversation.

The one was an elderly Englishman, with gray whiskers, a pleasing face, and an unmistakably military bearing; his companion, though dressed in conventional European style, frock coat, trousers, patent leathers, and silk hat, was of quite different nationality. In fact, his swarthy, olive complexion, dark, lustrous eyes, and black mutton chop whiskers proclaimed him a Hindoo, one of that cultured, thoroughly Anglicized class who have been so ready to adopt the customs of their English rulers, and to cast off the turban and the flowing gown.

The drift of the conversation I could not catch, but I saw the Englishman hand his companion a square, flat package, done up securely, in heavy brown wrapping paper, and sealed with red wax. At this, the Hindoo's emotion was intense, and his face sparkled with delight.

He opened his waistcoat, thrust the package into an inner pocket of this, and then carefully buttoned both waistcoat and frock coat over his breast. Then both gentlemen hastily left the bank, and I passed into the street a few yards behind them.

We turned in the same direction—out Threadneedle Street, and as I passed into the General Telegraph Office, that faces the colossal statue of Rowland Hill, the Englishman and the Hindoo took a cab and rattled up Old Broad Street.

This trifling circumstance of course did not impress me at the time, and I am only relating it because of the bearing it has upon future events. I had various little matters of business to attend to that day, and when I got through with them all, and hailed a westward bound omnibus, it was late in the afternoon.

At eight o'clock of that same evening I met a friend by special appointment, and accompanied him to Pantelli's restaurant in Green Street, Leicester Square, where he found and introduced me to a man that I had ardently desired to meet for a long time—an old Frenchman who had played a conspicuous part in the revolution of '48.

I acquired all the information that was needed for my purpose, and at ten o'clock we all sauntered into the street. On reaching the square, we separated, my companions going on toward Panton Street, while I turned northward past the flaming façade of the Alhambra Theater.

Just as I neared Coventry Street, I was startled to hear the report of a pistol close

at hand, and surmising instantly that something was wrong, I dashed forward on a run. When I arrived on the scene—which was the entrance to a dark and narrow side street—quite a crowd had already collected, and numerous persons were hurrying to the spot, habitués of the adjacent restaurants, patrons of the music halls, idlers who had been occupying the benches under the trees, and two policemen, who had sprung from no one knows where.

Falling in behind these latter, I soon reached the center of the crush, where, in a small cleared space, lay the dead body of a man, struck down with a bullet through his heart.

"A Lascar!" exclaimed one of the policemen, flashing his bullseye on the spot. "Queer place for a sailor."

I bent over the body with sudden curiosity. Yes, the officer was right; the poor victim was an Indian seaman; his dark features and nautical garb were plain evidence of that.

It was a commonplace, brutal murder, committed probably by a companion of the dead man. No doubt the murderer would be traced.

By this time the crowd was immense, and growing larger each minute. More policemen pushed forward, and with their sticks cleared a space about the body. In the panic that ensued I was forced back against the side wall of a house, and as I remained there for an instant, panting for breath, I felt something hard under foot.

With great difficulty I succeeded in getting hold of the object, which was flat and wrapped in paper, and slipping it into my coat pocket. This action was almost mechanical, for it immediately passed out of my mind, and I gave all my attention to the mysterious circumstances attending the murder.

The officers sought in vain for a clue among the assembled crowd. Plenty had heard the shot, but no one had been close enough to see the man fall, or to get the slightest glimpse of the murderer.

It was not a case of suicide, for no weapon could be found.

Gradually the crowd melted away. The body of the dead Lascar was taken to the nearest police station, and riotous strains of music floated out on the square from the portals of the Alhambra and the Empire. Death and dancing were close together that night.

CHAPTER II.

I MEET A FRIEND IN PARIS.

I WENT straight to my lodgings in Lisle Street, lit the lamp in my cozy little sitting room, dropped into an easy chair beside my table littered with books and papers—and then remembered with a start the package I had picked up.

I drew it from my pocket, glanced care-

lessly at it, and then uttered an involuntary cry of amazement—it was the identical packet that the Englishman had given to the Hindoo in the Bank of England that morning.

There could be no mistake about it, I felt sure; it was the same size, wrapped in the same kind of paper, and the waxen seals were still unbroken.

Here was a clue to the murder, and a very mysterious one at that. Was it a case of attempted robbery?

Had the Lascar tried to steal the package from the Hindoo and been shot for his pains, and had the package been lost in the struggle?

I puzzled over the affair until I was sleepy, and then I went to bed with the intention of handing my find over to the authorities on the following day.

The next morning breakfast and the early papers were sent up to my room together, and I hunted eagerly for the account of the murder. It was treated very briefly, and the paragraph ended in this way:

The dead Lascar had been stopping for ten days at Brown's Hotel, Leicester Square, and seemed to be well supplied with funds. Money was evidently the motive of the crime, and the murderer was scared away before he could rifle his victim. The police have not yet found a clue.

After reading this I determined on my course of action. I was fully convinced that the murder was no ordinary one, and that the clue in my possession might lead to very startling developments.

Here was a chance for some private detective work, and I welcomed it eagerly, in spite of the fact that it was my plain duty to turn the package and my evidence over to the police. I little dreamed then of the complications that would spring from my rashness.

The mysterious packet evidently contained a small box, and one made of sandalwood, to judge from the faint, sweet perfume that hovered about it. The wax that sealed the wrapping paper was stamped with the letters H. H.

I put my treasure carefully away—I had no present intention of opening it—and went down to several newspaper offices on Fleet Street, where I left two advertisements for insertion in the next issues of the papers. They read as follows:

WANTED—The address of the gentleman who handed a package to a Hindoo in the Bank of England on the morning of April 10th. Address A. B.,—Office.

FOUND—A square, flat package, wrapped in heavy paper, sealed with red wax, and stamped with the letters H. H. Address A. B.,—Office.

I was confident that these advertisements would bring a speedy reply, but four days passed without a single letter for A. B., and I began to think that I would have to open the packet after all if I wanted any definite information about the mystery.

I had no doubt that the contents would prove interesting.

But on the fifth morning I received a letter that caused a sudden change in my plans. It was from a friend in Paris, inclosing the address of an old Polish refugee residing in that city—a man whom I greatly desired to interview, in order to complete my series of sketches.

This was a case in which prompt action was necessary, and so I decided to go to Paris that night, and drop my detective work until my return, hoping that a reply to my advertisements would be received in the mean time.

I was afraid to leave the packet behind me, so I put it in my valise with a few traveling necessities.

At nine o'clock on the following morning I was in Paris, and after a hearty breakfast I started for the locality in which my Polish refugee lived.

With some difficulty I found the place—a very unsavory neighborhood it was, too, but I was disappointed to learn that the man I wanted had changed his place of abode on the previous day, and departed no one knew where.

This was exasperating, to say the least, and I started back through the city on foot, in a very ill humored frame of mind. I crossed the Seine, passed through the Place de la Concorde and turned into the Rue de Rivoli.

Before the main entrance of the Hotel Continental stood a very stylish dog cart, and as I reached the spot a gentleman hurried across the pavement toward it—an elderly man with sandy mustache and whiskers, faultlessly attired in a suit of light gray, with gloves and hat to match, and a boutonnière in his buttonhole.

On reaching the curb he turned half round, and our eyes met. The recognition was mutual.

"Sir Arthur!" I ejaculated in amazement.

"Bless my soul, it's Forbes!" he exclaimed, springing forward with outstretched hands. "I'm delighted to see you, my dear fellow. What good genius has drifted you to Paris to relieve my *ennui*? But where are you stopping? Go fetch your luggage to the Continental. You are my guest now."

"It is not worth while," I replied; "I must return to London at once."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said the baronet firmly. "Come give me your hotel Forbes, and then we'll take a spin in the Bois. I little expected to have such a companion."

I reluctantly named my modest stopping place, and thither Sir Arthur insisted on driving me.

He was so bent on having his own way that I made no further objections, and on reaching the hotel I paid my bill and tossed my bag into the dog cart.

"Now, for the Bois and a good long

talk!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, as he turned the horse westward and flicked him gently with the whip.

And while we are skimming over the asphalt pavement of Paris I must seize the opportunity to introduce my companion to the reader.

Sir Arthur Ashby, ex-governor of the port of Zaila on the Gulf of Aden, was one of the party of five who made that terrible journey down an underground African river, which I have previously mentioned, and we were naturally cemented by a strong tie of friendship. Sir Arthur was about fifty years of age, and though possessed of a very pompous manner, was as noble a man at heart as I have ever known.

This was our first meeting since we returned from Africa a year before, as the baronet had been traveling on the Continent during that interval. To tell the truth, Sir Arthur was somewhat nettled at the British government because they had failed to send a relief expedition to search for him in interior Africa where he was carried off into slavery by the Somalis, and he probably imagined that he was inflicting a severe punishment on his ungrateful country by depriving it of his society—for it must be confessed that Sir Arthur Ashby had a very high opinion of himself. This in nowise detracted from his numerous good qualities, however.

As we drove through the shady avenues of the Bois that afternoon I related, at his request, how my time had been spent of late, and told him of the mysterious London murder and the packet that I had found.

This did not interest him much and he dismissed the matter with the brief comment that "detective work was a dirty business, and I would much better have turned the affair over to the proper authorities."

He had little to tell me about his own doings in return.

"I am intensely bored with this sort of life," he admitted frankly; "not that it would be any more endurable at home, though. But do you know, Forbes, I actually feel a craving for more adventure at times—a longing to pack up and be off for Africa, or India, or Australia? I really can't understand it—at my time of life, too. One would think I had had enough of the thrilling in my career to satisfy me."

"One taste of adventure often creates a desire for more," I replied, quoting from the advice that had been given me in my youth. "But as far as I am concerned, Sir Arthur, I am well content with civilization at the present time."

"And so am I," he answered laughingly. "What an old fool I am to talk such nonsense! Can anything in the world compare with the Opéra, the Café Riche, and the Boulevard des Italiens on a spring night? Come, I will show you Paris."

The baronet turned his horse toward the

city, and on the ride back we chatted of anything but adventure.

CHAPTER III

A CHASE ON THE BOULEVARD.

I FULLY intended to return to London on the following day, and all Sir Arthur's dazzling allurements were unable to shake this determination. Dinner was served us in the baronet's sumptuous apartments in the Hotel Continental, and just as we were finishing, a visitor was announced—a young gentleman of about my own age, with a very effeminate countenance and a light mustache, pointed and waxed in the very perfection of French style.

"Delighted to see you, my dear fellow," exclaimed Sir Arthur. "Your arrival is most opportune. Let me introduce you to Mr. Melton Forbes, of whom you have often heard me speak. Forbes, this is Mr. Cecil Chandos; I think you have never met before."

"Aw! pleased to meet you, I'm sure," said Mr. Chandos, holding out his hand with a pleasant smile. "Sir Arthur has told me of your daring exploits in Africa. I quite envy you that remarkable journey, I assure you."

His voice had a certain enthusiastic ring that showed he meant what he said, and as this blasé young man dropped languidly into a chair and lit a cigarette, I scanned him with great interest.

The name of Cecil Chandos was not unknown to me. I had heard of his exploits at Oxford—his prowess in town and gown rows, his skill with the oars and on the cricket field, the nerve and cool headedness he had displayed on so many occasions, and yet to look at him it was hard to believe that these things could be.

His outward manner was that of a weary, bored man of the world.

He was dressed with scrupulous taste—glittering patent leathers, trousers properly creased, kid gloves without a wrinkle, and, to crown all, a gold rimmed monocle fitted with perfect ease over his right eye.

He spoke with a studied drawl that was apt to be aggravating, and yet a close observer might have detected, without knowing why, a certain sternness of character that lay beneath this show of effeminacy. Mr. Cecil Chandos was certainly an interesting type, and I was inclined to estimate him at his true value.

Several hours were spent in conversation, and then at Sir Arthur's suggestion we started out for a stroll on the boulevards.

Paris was in her glory that evening, for the spring had opened with unusual mildness, and on all the principal thoroughfares rows of little tables stood under the leafless trees, and the hum of conversation and the merry clink of glasses were as loud as on a midsummer's night.

Starting at the Place de l'Opéra, we walked slowly down the Boulevard des Italiens, enjoying to the utmost the gay life that surged around us.

"One could believe that the last days of the Empire have come back again," said Sir Arthur, with a tinge of sadness in his voice. "I spent the summer of '69 here."

"Aw! No doubt it was very fine," drawled Chandos, "but present day Paris is quite charming enough for me. It palls on a fellow, though. There is no other city in the world of which one can tire so rapidly."

"Quite true," asserted Sir Arthur. "But here is a vacant table; let us sit down for a while."

He stopped in front of a well known café as he spoke, and we were soon comfortably seated between two trees.

A waiter quickly joined us, and as the baronet penciled down his order, I glanced around at the occupants of the other tables.

Three yards distant, with his back turned toward me, sat a man reading by the electric light a copy of the London *Post*, and I noticed that his attention was given to the advertising columns.

Suddenly he dragged the paper to his eyes in a very excited manner, and turned partly round in his chair.

It was now my turn to be excited. I recognized the Hindoo—the owner of the lost package, and I divined instantly that my advertisement had caught his attention.

I was too greatly astonished by this discovery to be prudent.

"The murderer of the Lascar!" I exclaimed, half aloud, springing to my feet.

The Hindoo heard me, and with a single sharp glance he stuffed the paper into his pocket, and bolted across the boulevard.

I was after him like a streak, determined that he should not escape, and as we dived in among the cabs and omnibuses, I heard Chandos and Sir Arthur calling me loudly.

When we reached the other side of the street the fugitive was hardly six feet in advance, and just as I was about to lay my hands on him he wheeled into the Rue Favart, upsetting a couple of café tables in his haste, and dashed down the center of the street to avoid the crowds on the pavement.

He hailed an approaching cab, and the driver obediently pulled up. The Hindoo had already seized the door to drag it open, but by this time I was almost upon him, and realizing that his flight was cut off, he turned on me with a savage cry, and down we went on the asphalt.

I clung tightly to the fellow's arms, fearing that he would serve me as he did the Lascar; but before the struggle was a minute old Sir Arthur and Chandos reached the spot and dragged us apart.

"What does this mean?" cried the baronet. "Have you lost your senses, Forbes?"

I shook him off and turned to the Hin-

doo, who was struggling in Chandos's strong grasp.

"Look here!" I exclaimed eagerly. "I had no intention of harming you. I have a package sealed with red wax that was found in Leicester Square. Does it belong to you?"

The Hindoo flashed his dark eyes on me for an instant, and his face shone with joy.

"Yes! yes!" he whispered eagerly. "It is mine. Where is it? Give it to me."

Then he looked nervously around at the crowd that had begun to gather, and coming close up to me he said in a low voice:

"Restore the package to me and I will reveal to you a great secret. I will make you a proposition by which you can become wealthy."

"These two gentlemen are my friends," I replied. "They must come with us."

The Hindoo glanced at Sir Arthur and Chandos.

"Very well," he said. "I agree to that. Take me away from here quickly or we shall be arrested."

I explained the situation to the baronet in a few words, and then we pushed toward the cab which was standing a few feet away.

The crowd sullenly made room for us, disappointed at the peaceable ending of the affair, and just as we got safely inside, a *sergeant de ville* pushed forward, calling on us to halt.

"Drive off, quick! Hotel Continental!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, passing a generous coin out to the driver.

With brief hesitation the fellow whipped up his horses, and we rattled briskly out of the Rue Favart. The *sergeant de ville* followed us on a run for some distance, and then abandoned the chase.

Not a word was spoken during the brief ride. The Hindoo calmly brushed off his soiled clothes, and pressed out his ruffled shirt bosom.

On reaching the hotel the cab was dismissed and we went straight to Sir Arthur's apartments.

I brought the package and placed it on the center of the table; then we drew our chairs around it and sat down, turning expectantly toward the Hindoo, who was in a visible state of agitation.

A great mystery was about to be revealed.

CHAPTER IV.

A REMARKABLE STORY.

BEFORE beginning to speak the Hindoo glanced keenly about the room, and Sir Arthur anticipated his wishes by turning the key in the door.

The stranger acknowledged the baronet's courtesy with a grave bow, and then placing one hand on the packet, he said in a clear voice and in the best of English:

"I see a deep meaning in the fate that has restored my lost treasure to me tonight,

and provided me at the same time with an opportunity that I have long desired.

"I see that you are all Englishmen, and I feel assured of fair and honorable treatment at your hands, whatever may be your decision concerning the matter that I am about to lay before you.

"My name is Jopal Singh, and I am the lawful rajah of the little native state of Pangkong, which lies in the extreme north of the province of Punjab, between Cashmere and the valley of the Indus.

"I will not weary you by a long recital of my family history. In 1830 my grandfather, Syad Jafar, was deposed by the English government, and the head of another branch of the family, Durga Das by name, was put in his stead. My grandfather fled to Afghanistan, taking with him his son and my father, Pertab Singh, then a lad ten years old. The ameer received him cordially, and he resided at Cabul for five years, until accidentally shot by an Afghan.

"On his deathbed he spoke to my father in the following words:

"It is my desire, Pertab, that you should some day regain the state of Pangkong, which the hated English have stolen from us. Harken, therefore, to that which I have done.

"Knowing long beforehand of the traitorous intentions of the English government, I collected together a vast quantity of treasure, many millions of rupees in value, and put it in a safe hiding place. The secret to this wealth I locked in a sandalwood box, and the box I buried under the great ivory throne which stood in the palace at Pangkong. When, therefore, you shall have attained a proper age and regained by force of arms your ancestral rights, those vast riches will be your reward. Otherwise your eyes shall never behold them."

"When Syad Jafar had said these words, he made my father swear to recover the throne—and then he died.

"Nine years after this my father married an Afghan woman, and of this union I was born, in 1845. My father was only too eager to drive Durga Das from his stolen position, but no suitable occasion was found until 1860, when I was fifteen years old.

"Then, with the aid of the ameer, Pertab Singh attempted to take possession of Pangkong, but the English interfered, and he was made a prisoner. He succeeded, however, in destroying the palace and getting possession of the sandalwood box that was buried under the throne.

"For this attempt to regain what was his own the English condemned my father and shot him. Among them was one young officer, to whose father Syad Jafar had shown many kindnesses in his time, and knowing these things Pertab Singh confided the sandalwood box to this officer, whose name was Harold Heathcote, and begged that he would restore it to me. This interview

took place on the night before my father was shot.

"At this time I was far away in Afghanistan, and knew nothing whatever of the hidden treasure or of the sandalwood box.

"When the news came of my father's death, I was secretly provided with money by the ameer, and by certain wealthy Hindoos who had been friends of my father, and sent to Europe to be educated, with the understanding that some day I should try to regain Pangkong. This, however, is far more difficult now than it was in my father's time.

"I must now resume the story at a later date. For thirty years I have lived on the Continent, most of the time at Paris or St. Petersburg, and yet my identity has never been known save to a chosen few. The English government has long wondered what became of Pertab Singh's son.

"Ten days ago word came to me in Paris that an Englishman by the name of Heathcote had been vainly searching for me for years, and that he had a message from my dead father.

"I had been informed soon after my father's death of the hidden treasure, but I believed that Durga Das had long since found the sandalwood box and gained possession of the money. Imagine, then, my surprise when Mr. Heathcote, on my proving my identity, handed over to me the long lost box, which he had placed for safe keeping in the Bank of England.

"There lies the package now—still unopened. He told me how it came into his possession, but refused to permit me to open it in his presence, saying that the debt of gratitude he owed my grandfather was now paid, and that in future we had better be strangers. I respected his motives, and we parted on friendly terms."

At this point Jopal Singh paused and drew a long breath.

"My story is not quite done," he resumed slowly. "It has a tragic ending and blood has been spilled. It seems that Durga Das had some knowledge of this sandalwood box and of its import; also that it was in Mr. Heathcote's possession. You shall judge for yourself why I am of this opinion.

"On four different occasions men presented themselves to Mr. Heathcote and claimed to be Pertab Singh's son, and twice his residence was searched from garret to roof by robbers, though nothing was taken. On the night that I parted from him I was attacked in Leicester Square by a Lascar, who knocked me down and stole the sandalwood box. I shot him in self defense, and then fled to avoid arrest.

"I discovered, only when too late, that I had left the box behind. I feared the English police so much that I came directly to Paris, and it was only this evening that I discovered in a London paper an advertisement relating to my lost box. And now I find it before me—here in Paris."

The Hindoo ceased speaking and looked at me in an inquiring manner. I told him then what I knew of the transaction, and how I came to insert the advertisements in the London papers.

Sir Arthur and Chandos had listened to the Hindoo's tale with the most rapt attention.

"This Durga Das is surely not alive to-day?" questioned the baronet.

"No," replied Jopal Singh. "He was succeeded twenty years ago by his son, Baboo Das, to whom he must have communicated the secret of the sandalwood box. I have no doubt that Mr. Heathcote's house has been under constant surveillance for years past.

"As for that Lascar, he was a native of the state Pangkong, beyond a doubt. It is quite probable that more of Baboo Das' emissaries are dogging me now. All this may seem very strange to you, gentlemen, but a Hindoo will permit no obstacle to thwart his purpose."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Sir Arthur. "This sounds like a chapter from 'The Moonstone.' I must walk to the window to convince myself that I am really in Paris."

He glanced down into the Rue de Rivoli and then returned to his seat.

"Aw! What do you propose to do now?" asked Chandos dryly, squinting at the Hindoo through his monocle; "go dig up your treasure, eh? Or do you think of getting up a little revolution of your own?"

For a full minute Jopal Singh made no reply. Perhaps he resented Chandos' bantering tone.

"No," he said slowly; "I am the rightful rajah of Pangkong, but I shall never assert my claims. As for the treasure, that is quite a different matter, and I hope to recover it. Unfortunately, my old friends are all dead, and I am today entirely destitute of means. Gentlemen, allow me to submit to you this proposition. Assist me to recover this treasure, and the half of it shall be yours—divided among you in equal shares."

CHAPTER V.

INDIA IN SIGHT

"Bless my soul," muttered Sir Arthur, bringing his hand down vehemently on the table; "a very remarkable proposition, indeed!"

We all looked at one another, and then at Jopal Singh, who was leaning back in his chair with folded arms, an imperturbable expression on his face.

Chandos broke the silence.

"Aw, my dear fellow," he drawled, "we can't buy a pig in a poke, you know. Let us see the color of your merchandise."

This inelegant form of expression was readily understood by the Hindoo.

"A thousand pardons," he exclaimed;

"you are quite right. I will open the box, and then you shall tell me your decision."

He drew a knife from his pocket, and quickly slashed the heavy wrapping paper two or three times, causing it to fall apart. There was then revealed to our curious gaze a beautifully polished little box of sandalwood, bound around the edges with tiny strips of gold. In the center of the lid was a dab of purple wax, and in one side a keyhole was visible, but no key.

Without the slightest hesitation Jopai Singh ripped off this lump of wax with his knife blade, and placed it in the palm of his hand. Then he struck it a smart blow with the hilt of the knife, and it cracked into little bits, revealing a tiny gold key.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Sir Arthur.

Every eye was fixed intently on Jopai Singh as he fitted the key into the lock and turned it with a sharp click. The lid flew up, and we beheld a very yellow and dirty bit of parchment, no more than three inches square.

The Hindoo clutched it with trembling fingers, and as he read the faded characters that were written upon it, his eyes sparkled with delight.

"It is in Persian," he said. "I shall have to translate it for you."

"I am familiar with that tongue," exclaimed Sir Arthur, reaching out his hand for the paper.

He scanned it with a look of perplexity for a moment or two, and then his brow suddenly cleared.

"I have it," he said, and straightway he read aloud:

"TO MY HIGHLY ESTEEMED SON, PERTAB SINGH.

"The Island of Mog, by the image of Vishnu. There search and much more will you learn.

"SYNAD JOFAR,
Rajah of Pangkong.

"That is a very literal translation," added the baronet. "The document is genuine beyond a doubt."

"It seems a rather ambiguous code of instructions," I remarked.

"Pardon me—but it is perfectly plain," said Jopai Singh. "I know the location of the Island of Mog well, and there we shall find the treasure. It lies midway in the river Indus, and near the southern border of Pangkong. It is simply a great mass of rocks, and contains many curious carvings executed on the stones."

"Ah yes, yes!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in rather a flurried manner. "This is a very remarkable affair. In fact, it really requires some careful consideration. I trust you will excuse us, my dear sir, if we—aw—aw—withdraw to a private apartment to consult on the matter."

"Most certainly," replied Jopai Singh. "Take your own time, gentlemen. I will await your decision."

Sir Arthur nodded to Chandos and my-

self, and we followed him into an adjoining room—his bed chamber, closing the door behind us.

"Well, what answer shall we give this Hindoo?" began the baronet abruptly. "I believe his story is correct, 'pon my word, I do. It will be quite a little expedition, and perhaps attended with some danger. In fact, it's not the treasure that I care so much about; to tell the truth I'm weary of this humdrum existence and crave for another taste of adventure. Bless my soul! At my time of life, too!"

Chandos calmly lit a cigarette, and blew a dainty cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

"I'm with you, Ashby," he said briefly. "You can count on me."

"And you, Forbes?" continued the baronet, looking at me somewhat anxiously.

For a moment I made no reply. Jopai Singh's strange story had roused within me the old passion for adventure that I had fondly believed was banished forever, and the career that I had mapped out for myself—the quiet journalistic life in London, the preparation of my work on "Famous Refugees"—was lost sight of in the allurements of the proposed expedition.

The enthusiasm of my companions proved the last straw, and my determination was made instantly.

"I will go with you," I announced. "I thought I was tired of adventure, Sir Arthur, but I find I am mistaken."

"Good!" cried the baronet. "I knew you would not fail us, Forbes. It is settled then that we accept the Hindoo's proposition. As for expenses, I assume all that. My income has a very large margin, and I don't believe you fellows are rolling in wealth."

"Aw! quite right, Sir Arthur," drawled Chandos. "I am decidedly short at the present time, and a share in that hidden treasure will be very acceptable."

I made no reply. My own situation was quite similar to Chandos', and the prospect of finding wealth was a very agreeable one.

"Come," said Sir Arthur, "we must return to the other room and tell the Hindoo of our decision."

Jopai Singh received the favorable news quite as a matter of course, and then, at the baronet's request, he gave us much information about the state of Pangkong and the nature of the semi civilized tribes who dwelt there. He had a frank, straightforward manner that impressed us all very favorably.

We sat up until nearly morning discussing the expedition in all its details. Jopai Singh suggested that we should visit India ostensibly for the purpose of hunting.

"It will be best to go directly to Cashmere," he said, "and procure from the maharajah a permit to hunt through his dominions. We can then easily make our way into the adjoining province of Pangkong. I will shave off my whiskers before

starting, and assume the disguise of a low caste native."

"It would be well to have another man in the party," suggested Sir Arthur, "and I know just the fellow that will suit us—a former valet of mine by the name of John Darracot, a sturdy, honest man about forty years old. He is now lodge keeper on my estates in Yorkshire. I can have him over here in forty eight hours."

Jopal Singh readily favored this proposition, and it was agreed that John Darracot should be one of the party.

Sir Arthur invited Jopal Singh to be his guest at the Hotel Continental, and the Hindoo accepted the invitation.

On the following morning, by the baronet's desire, I returned to London to purchase what supplies were needed for the expedition. A few hours sufficed to make these arrangements, and then I hastened to my rooms in Lisle Street and bargained with the landlady to store my books and furniture until my return.

A cablegram from Sir Arthur had summoned John Darracot to London, where I met him by appointment, and we journeyed back to Paris together. The supply of arms, ammunition, and various other things that I purchased in London had been shipped directly to Calcutta, so there was nothing to delay our start, and we immediately left Paris for India via the overland route to Brindisi.

Jopal Singh, true to his word, had shaved off his beard and donned the humble attire of a Hindoo servant, passing in fact for Sir Arthur's valet.

With John Darracot we were all favorably impressed. He was a sturdy type of the British yeoman—honest, simple hearted, and brave, with a sincere attachment for Sir Arthur.

Nothing worthy of mention took place on the steamer voyage from Brindisi to Calcutta.

It was the second week in May when we sighted the low lying coast of Bengal, and we viewed the land with pleasure and enthusiasm. Little did we dream of the dark chain of misfortunes that destiny was even then forging around us, link by link!

CHAPTER VI.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

ON reaching Calcutta, and going through the formalities of landing, we went directly to the Great Eastern Hotel, where we intended to remain for several days—until we could get possession of the baggage that had been shipped from London, and conclude the definite arrangements for the fifteen hundred mile ride across India, which could fortunately be made by rail.

However, through some delay in shipping, our boxes did not arrive for a week, and the irksome wait tried our patience severely.

Sir Arthur took advantage of this interval to hunt up some of his old acquaintances, and to procure through them letters of introduction to the maharajah of Cashmere.

Jopal Singh never once ventured away from the hotel. In spite of his disguise, he seemed to dread recognition. Possibly he feared that spies of Baboo Das still had him under surveillance.

But at last the long expected baggage arrived, and after taking out a rifle and a brace of revolvers apiece, with a supply of ammunition, we resealed the boxes, which contained for the most part provisions in tins, and shipped them directly to Peshawur, the frontier city of northern India, where the line of railway terminated.

Sir Arthur, Darracot, and I were fitted out with plain, serviceable garments, consisting of stout boots, trousers and jacket of heavy duck, and spacious, cork lined mets.

Chandos, however, had procured *his* outfit in Paris, and his appearance savored strongly of the Rue de la Paix.

His boots were of the softest and most expensive leather. His perfectly fitting suit was cut from fawn colored hunting cloth, and his helmet was gorgeous with a twisted band of silk, which hung over his shoulders in fluttering streamers.

Moreover, he had provided himself with a square knapsack of glazed leather, which was strapped to his back; and in this he carried a set of shaving utensils, a stick of mustache wax, a bottle of lavender water, blacking and brush, a manicure set, and a great box of the best Turkish cigarettes.

Little wonder that the natives cast awesome glances upon him when he strutted about the hotel corridors with his monocle carefully adjusted to his right eye.

"Bless my soul! What tomfoolery this is!" remarked the baronet on one occasion, referring to the toilet articles in the knapsack.

"Ah! My dear Ashby, what would you have me do?" replied Chandos, with a provoking drawl. "A fellow can't change his habits, you know, as a chameleon does his color."

"Nonsense!" said Sir Arthur. "Have your own way, though. You will soon tire of that flummery."

But subsequent events proved the baronet to be wrong.

On the evening of the 25th of May—the same day on which we had received our baggage—all was in readiness for the start. Our tickets had been purchased, and we were to leave Calcutta at eight o'clock on the following morning by the Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

With the intention of fortifying ourselves for the journey by a good night's rest, we retired early. Our apartments in the Great Eastern Hotel consisted of a suite of three rooms connecting with one another,

and each of which opened on a wide corridor.

They were on the third floor of the building, and from each room two windows faced the street.

The connecting doors and those also which opened on the corridor were hung with strips of matting that allowed the air to pass through freely. Each apartment was provided with the usual ceiling fans and a punka wallah to operate them, and these men were in all cases trusted servants of the hotel.

Chandos and I occupied the middle of the three rooms, which held two beds. On our right were Sir Arthur and Jopal Singh, and in the apartment to the left slept Darracot.

It so happened that Jopal Singh had intrusted the sandalwood box and its contents to my keeping. He would much better have destroyed it, or at least the papers that it held, since we were perfectly acquainted with its contents.

But this view of the matter did not occur to us, and all the time we were at Calcutta I carried the treasure about with me, placing it under my pillow at night.

On this particular evening I did not neglect my usual precaution, and the box, folded up in the jacket, was under my head when I went to sleep. The punka wallah in our apartment was a most unusually lazy fellow, for twice he fell asleep at his post and the heat of the room wakened me immediately.

I scolded the rascal as well as my scanty knowledge of Hindustani would permit, and then went back to bed, envying Chandos his ability to sleep through it all.

This time I was not disturbed for three or four hours, and then I woke up very suddenly, half suffocated by the sultriness of the atmosphere. I was fairly dripping with perspiration.

I lay perfectly still for an instant. The fans were not moving, and in the dim light I could see my punka wallah leaning against the wall sound asleep.

I was about to reach out for one of my boots to hurl it at the fellow's head, when, all of a sudden, I detected a faint noise in the direction of the window, which was close behind the bed, and at the same time a dark shadow fell across the polished floor.

With every nerve tingling, I dropped my head back and awaited further developments.

I was inclined to think it was all a delusion, for though the window was wide open, it was not likely that any person could gain access to it from the street.

I could hear Chandos breathing heavily, and knew that he had nothing to do with the suspicious noise.

A few seconds later, however, I heard a soft footstep close to my ear. I was now thoroughly alarmed, and concluded to spring up and face the daring intruder.

But before I could act on this determination a hand was slipped deftly under my pillow, and when it was withdrawn a second or two later the sandalwood box went with it.

I realized instantly what had happened, and like a flash I was out on the floor uttering shout after shout. I had a brief glimpse of the thief towering above me and then a heavy blow sent me reeling to my knees.

As I staggered up again I saw the rascal gliding toward the door, but before he could reach it Chandos and the punka wallah, who were both awake by this time, cut him off, and he darted back for the window again, by which he had no doubt entered.

The slight dizziness occasioned by the blow had passed away, and as the thief slipped by I threw myself on his back and bore him to the floor.

The shock caused him to drop a knife that he had in his hand, and the weapon rolled across the room with a ringing clatter. The accident undoubtedly saved my life.

I clung tightly to my captive, calling on Chandos for help; but before he could gain my side the rascal—who was almost stark naked and greased from head to foot—slipped out of my grasp like an eel and vanished through the window before I could put hands on him again.

Chandos and I rushed to the spot and looked out, fully expecting to see a mangled form on the street below.

But far different was the sight that met our eyes. The rascal was apparently crawling along the perpendicular wall of the house like a fly, and moving swiftly from window to window.

As we watched him in breathless amazement he crawled round the angle of the building, ten or twelve windows off, and vanished from sight.

"It's the ledge," cried Chandos, pointing down to a small projection, barely three inches wide, that ran along the side of the house a few feet below the window sill. "That explains his escape. He put his feet on it and pulled himself along by the crevices between the stones."

By this time Sir Arthur, Jopal Singh, Darracot and numerous guests and attendants of the hotel were pouring into the room, all demanding with one voice the cause of the alarm.

Then I remembered what had happened, and hurriedly searched the scene of the struggle for the sandalwood box. My jacket lay on the floor in a crumpled heap, but the precious box was gone.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

WHEN Jopal Singh learned what had happened he behaved like a madman, and it was all we could do to prevent him from

climbing out of the window, and risking his life on the narrow ledge.

Chandos, more quick witted than the rest of us, had already started off to search the other part of the building, and many of the guests aided him in the hunt.

It was quite possible that the thief was an occupant of one of the rooms, and by this time he might be in his bed feigning sleep.

Of course the hotel was in an uproar, and the corridor outside of our rooms, fairly swarmed with people.

Jopal Singh refused to be pacified.

"We are undone!" he groaned. "All that vast treasure will be lost to us."

Then he turned imploringly to Sir Arthur.

"Offer a thousand rupees for the capture of the thief," he begged. "The rascal can't be far away. He is either a guest or a servant of the hotel, I am sure of it."

In his excitement the Hindoo spoke loudly, and his imprudent words were overheard by many standing near.

Sir Arthur and I pulled him to the corner of the room.

"You are a fool," whispered the baronet angrily. "You are only making the matter worse by your outcry. Be calm, and take a sensible view of the affair."

"But the secret of the treasure is stolen," exclaimed the Hindoo excitedly, "and the thief is a spy of Baboo Das. I have been followed clear from London, and my identity is now known."

"But the capture of the fellow would do us no good," persisted the baronet. "In fact, it would cause a vast amount of harm. Don't you suppose he has made himself acquainted with the contents of that paper by this time?"

"Yes, yes," groaned Jopal Singh; "of course he has."

"Then it will be better for us if he is not caught. The whole affair must be hushed up, or the object of our expedition will become known all over Calcutta."

"But what shall we do?" exclaimed the Hindoo. "Baboo Das will now get the treasure, and, moreover, he will make a desperate attempt to kill me. My life is not worth a moment's purchase."

"We will outwit him," said Sir Arthur calmly. "The first train for Peshawur is the one which we intend to take. No doubt this thief will be on board—though it will be impossible to identify him. You did not see his features, Forbes?"

"No," I replied; "I should not know him again."

"Well," continued the baronet, "it will simply be a race for the treasure, and I am confident that we shall win. On reaching Peshawur we must travel as rapidly as possible to this island on the Indus. The advantage, you see, is with us, for the thief who has stolen this secret will delay long enough to find companions to aid him in his enterprise."

"But our lives will be in great danger," interrupted Jopal Singh. "How shall we escape with the treasure if we do get it?"

"We will find a way," said the baronet. "Leave that to me. Hush! Here come the managers of the hotel, and they have the police with them."

Chandos entered the room at the head of the visitors.

"Well," he exclaimed, "the thief has made good his escape. He jumped from the third floor into a tree, and must have dropped to the ground pretty heavily, to judge from two broken branches that are lying on the pavement."

"And here is a captain of police," said the manager of the hotel, designating a smooth faced man in a dark gray uniform. "He will hear your complaint, and make every effort to catch the daring scoundrel."

"Ah! but it is really not worth while," rejoined Sir Arthur, addressing the officer.

"Even if the man were caught, we could not appear against him. We are compelled to leave here for the North on the early train."

"But for the reputation of the hotel the rascal must be apprehended," interrupted the manager. "Such a disgraceful affair never occurred here before. You will oblige me greatly by giving this officer all the facts in the case."

"Certainly," replied the baronet politely. "Forbes, tell him what you know."

He darted a keen glance at me that was readily understood. I proceeded to relate in detail the manner in which I was wakened by the entry of the thief into the room, and the short struggle on the floor.

"He dragged my coat from under my pillow," I said, "but was compelled to drop it. My watch and money were in an inside pocket, and, as you see, they are still there."

I held up the coat before the officer, and showed him the purse and the watch.

Greatly to my relief, he did not ask the question that I most feared, though he inquired minutely into less important details, jotting everything down in a note book. We gave him our names, and promised to call at police headquarters on our return from the North.

Finally the officer departed, taking with him the knife that had fallen from the thief's hand—a very ordinary weapon—and he was shortly followed by the manager, who offered us profuse apologies for the annoyance that we had suffered, and promised to inflict dire punishment on my lazy punka wallah.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Sir Arthur fervently, "at last we are alone! You told your story very neatly, Forbes, and were not compelled to utter any untruths. And now, as daylight is streaming in the windows, we had better have a bath, a breakfast, and then start for our train. If we miss that, we miss our only chance of capturing Jopal Singh's treasure."

The baronet affected to be in the best of spirits, but he took an opportunity of whispering into my ear:

"This promises to be a very serious affair, Forbes. Not that I am afraid of being beaten in the race for the treasure; but after we get our hands on it we may have to fight for our lives with the rajah Baboo Das and his retainers. It is a beastly wild country—that district north of the Punjab. Keep a stiff upper lip, though, and don't let Jopal Singh see that we have any fears. His nervous system is pretty badly shattered already."

It was a deep relief to find ourselves on board the through train of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. At great expense Sir Arthur had procured a private carriage for our little party, which we were to occupy clear through to Peshawur.

The huge railway station was crowded with passengers, and our train was, of course, a very large one. Curiosity impelled us to remain outside until almost the moment of starting, and watch the crowds who hurried by us into the carriages.

We saw English officers, private soldiers, tea and indigo planters, airily clad in white linen, and accompanied by their wives and children; dignified Parsees; tourists from England, America, and the Continent, with field glasses and guide books; sportsmen in quest of adventure, and a very heterogeneous swarm of natives, from the blue blooded Brahmin in broadcloth and silk turban to the half naked, low caste Hindoo who traveled third class.

Among these latter was undoubtedly the clever scoundrel who had made himself acquainted with the secret of the sandalwood box, and though we could not see him, he probably kept a very close watch upon us.

"It is quite possible that we are the only through passengers for Peshawur," said Sir Arthur, "with the exception of this daring thief. We may be able to make a shrewd guess at his identity before we arrive at our journey's end."

Promptly on time the train started, and Calcutta was soon miles behind us. Of that long, hot, and wearisome ride the less said the better.

We passed the time reading, talking, and sleeping, with intervals for our meals, which were served in a very charming manner, thanks to the baronet's liberality. As he had predicted, very few of the original passengers remained when we reached Benares, which was distant about five hundred miles from Calcutta. At all of the large cities—Allahabad, Cawnpore, Agra, and Delhi—many persons left the train, and new arrivals took their places.

On the second day of our journey, at seven o'clock in the evening, we reached Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab.

As the train slowed up before the station, our coach was boarded by a native officer,

resplendent in a red uniform and sword who first made a profound salaam and then said quietly:

"Gentlemen, you are my prisoners."

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRESTED.

For a moment we stared at the intruder in amazement, and he repeated the assertion in a sterner voice.

"Prisoners, are we?" exclaimed Sir Arthur. "Bless my soul! What does the fellow mean? This is a poor sort of a joke."

"Aw! I fear it is no joke at all," said Chandos. "I see a file of soldiers outside."

The baronet glanced uneasily through the window, and then turned to the officer.

"What does this outrage mean?" he demanded indignantly. "By what right or authority do you meddle with inoffensive English travelers?"

"I cannot tell you," replied the officer stolidly. "My instructions are to arrest four Englishmen and a Hindoo, who are traveling in a private car. You must accompany me to the citadel, and unless you come at once I shall be obliged to use force."

"But there must be some mistake," cried Sir Arthur. "That order cannot apply to us. We are going on to Peshawur, and a delay will cause us to lose our train."

At this point Jopal Singh came forward, his dusky face ablaze with wrath.

"Fate is against us," he cried. "First, the loss of the box, and now this plot to prevent our reaching Peshawur. Both misfortunes are due to the same person."

We looked at him in amazement, convinced that he had struck the right clue, though not understanding exactly how the thing could be possible.

"I believe you are right," said the baronet. "We are in a bad fix, with no way to get out of it. We had better accompany the officer at once, and perhaps we can straighten matters out before the train starts."

At that moment, however, our carriage moved forward with a jerk, and half a dozen native soldiers sprang on the narrow platform.

"We are off!" cried the baronet joyfully; and at first we were of the same opinion.

But a moment later we understood too well what it meant. Our carriage had been near the center of the train, and now, looking through the rear window, we saw that the half dozen coaches behind it were detached. We moved forward a short distance, then backward, and, with a sudden jerk, the fore part of the train steamed ahead, leaving our carriage standing on a siding.

During this time the officer stood quietly by the door.

"Now come with me," he said. "Your carriage has been taken out of the train, and its contents will not be molested."

Resistance would have been worse than useless, so we filed out upon the track one by one, and turned into a broad street that led directly away from the railway station. A squad of soldiers marched before and behind us.

We had barely gone twenty yards when a shrill whistle was heard, and we looked around in time to see the united sections of the train steaming off for Peshawur. We were left behind.

"When does the next train leave?" inquired Sir Arthur of the officer who had arrested him.

"At eleven o'clock tomorrow morning," was the reply. "It is a very slow train, though."

This information struck despair to our hearts. Our unknown enemy would have the start of us by sixteen hours—no; more than that, if the next train was a slow one.

Our expedition was as good as wrecked, and the fabulous treasure buried by Syad Jafar would fall into the hands of Baboo Das.

We followed our conductors in gloomy silence, gazed at by the inhabitants of the city, among whom were not a few Europeans. It was a most humiliating position, and we felt it keenly.

Chandos seemed to think more of his personal appearance than of the disgrace. He stopped several times to brush the dust from his boots with his handkerchief, and by the aid of a small looking glass he drew together the straggling points of his mustache, and twisted them into proper shape.

Our convoy of soldiers led us through a succession of narrow, gloomy streets, lined with bazars, to the northwest corner of the city. It was growing dark when we passed the great magazine and the vast military workshops, and, in a short time, we reached the citadel, a large stone building of gloomy aspect and of great antiquity.

We were taken immediately into a cheerful, well furnished apartment on the ground floor, lighted by two very handsome lamps.

An elderly gentleman, in spotless linen suit, was seated beside a desk, reading a newspaper, and as we entered the room he rose to his feet and looked at us oddly through his eyeglasses.

"Are these your prisoners, Captain Pandit?" he demanded of the officer. "I don't understand this matter at all. Why, these men do not look like criminals."

"I have obeyed my instructions, sir," replied the captain. "These are the men I was ordered to arrest."

At this point Sir Arthur took a voice in the discussion.

"I demand an explanation of this outrageous insult," he exclaimed loudly. "Things have come to a pretty pass, indeed, when a party of English sportsmen can be dragged from their private car and paraded through the public streets like common malefactors. I intend to have ample satisfaction, sir, rest assured of that. I am Sir Arthur Ashby, ex-governor of Zaila, and these gentlemen are my friends. Through this asinine performance we have lost our train to Peshawur, and irreparable damage has been done. Here are proofs of our identity if you wish them," and the baronet slammed down a packet of papers with such vehemence that the dignitary in the white suit retreated behind his desk.

But he immediately came forward again with outstretched hand, and said curiously: "Are you indeed Sir Arthur Ashby? Your name is quite familiar to me. My name is Colonel Wood, and I am the lieutenant governor of Lahore. Concerning this unfortunate affair, which I am really inclined to believe an error, I can only say that at three o'clock this afternoon I received a telegram purporting to come from the department of police at Ferozpor, containing instructions to detain until further orders a party of Englishmen who were on board the through train to Peshawur, and occupied a private car.

"I was compelled, of course, to act upon these instructions—you will admit that no other expedient was possible—but when no more definite message followed the first one I became uneasy, and only a few moments ago I telegraphed to Ferozpor to satisfy myself that all was right. I expect an answer in a very short time. Have you any suspicion yourself as to what this very strange affair can mean?"

As he finished speaking Colonel Wood directed chairs to be brought for us, and as we seated ourselves Captain Pandit and his file of troops withdrew.

Sir Arthur hesitated before answering this last question.

"Here's another bush to beat around," he whispered in my ear. "That scoundrel must have left the train at Ferozpor long enough to send the bogus telegram. We stopped there at just about three o'clock, you remember, Forbes?"

I nodded assent, and then the baronet turned towards Colonel Wood and said: "I am inclined to think that we have been made the victims of a practical joke, though I am unable to suspect any one in particular. If my suspicions are verified it will be best to let the matter drop, as far as you are concerned, colonel, though I shall probably discover the perpetrator at some future time and make him pay dearly for the annoyance that he has caused us."

"And if that time comes," replied the colonel, "I hope you will visit a double retribution upon him for putting the bur-

den of such an unpleasant affair upon my shoulders. It is an ill wind, however, that blows nobody good. It is seldom that I receive such pleasant visitors. Allow me to offer you and your companions some refreshments, Sir Arthur."

No one ventured any objection to this, and when cigars, coffee, and biscuits were produced we quite forgot for the moment that we were under arrest.

But this fact was soon recalled to us by the entry of a native soldier, who handed to Colonel Wood a small red envelope. The anxiously looked for telegram had arrived at last.

The colonel hastily tore it open, and scanned the contents.

"Listen, gentlemen," he said eagerly, and then he read aloud:

FEROZPOUR, 7:30 P. M.
TO COLONEL WOOD, LAHORE:
No such message was sent from this Department. ATKIN, Chief of Police.

"Bless my soul! I knew it," muttered Sir Arthur, while Jopai Singh started nervously to his feet.

"You are now free, gentlemen, of course," said Colonel Wood, "and I trust you will do me the honor to be my guests over night."

"We thank you for your courtesy, colonel," replied the baronet, "but beg to decline the kind invitation. We must move on to Peshawur at once."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "SPECIAL" TO PESHAWUR.

WHAT could the baronet mean? He was surely aware that no train left for Peshawur until nearly noon of the following day. We looked at him in amazement.

"But, my dear sir," interposed Colonel Wood, "I really fear that it is impossible—"

"Nothing is impossible, my dear sir," exclaimed the baronet. "We must, at all hazards, overtake our train before it reaches Peshawur. It is now nearly half past eight o'clock," he added, glancing at his watch. "What is the distance from Lahore to Peshawur, colonel, and at what rate of speed does this train run that we have missed?"

"The train runs at moderate speed and makes many stops," replied Colonel Wood.

"Peshawur is slightly more than three hundred miles from here."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, "our chances are good. Now, colonel, I must beg you for an introduction to the head official of the railway company at Lahore. I must have a special engine at once to take us on to Peshawur."

At this Jopai Singh uttered a cry of delight, and we smiled at one another.

Colonel Wood was at first speechless with amazement.

"But—but it will cost you a small for-

tune," he stammered, "and even then it is very doubtful if you can get it."

"I must have that engine if it takes a lakh of rupees," replied Sir Arthur firmly. "A matter of urgent necessity requires our presence at Peshawur."

The baronet's manner was so decided that Colonel Wood yielded without further protestation.

"I will do my best to aid you," he said. "Excuse me for a moment, and I will procure a carriage."

As the colonel left the room Sir Arthur turned to us with a smile of triumph.

"We will outwit that scoundrel yet," he said, "if we can only procure an engine—and I have no doubt that we can."

"The real danger will begin when we arrive at Peshawur," rejoined Jopai Singh. "The town contains many persons of a dangerous character, and this unknown enemy of ours, who is certainly in the employ of Baboo Das, will have no difficulty in hiring a band of assassins. I have no doubt that the fellow was acting conjointly with the dead Lascar, and has tracked me clear from London."

"Yes, it looks very much that way," admitted the baronet. "That Baboo Das is a wonderful man to send private detectives to such places as London and Paris. But never fear, we shall beat him at his own game."

At this juncture Colonel Wood returned, and conducted us to a roomy vehicle drawn by two horses, which was standing outside the citadel. It held us all very comfortably, and in a few seconds we were rattling through the torch lit streets of Lahore.

The manager of this section of the Peninsula Railway was an Englishman by the name of Bolton, and we were fortunate enough to find him at his office in the station building.

Colonel Wood introduced us, giving an explanation of our unfortunate plight, and then Sir Arthur made known his desire.

"Well, now, gentlemen, I would like to oblige you," said Mr. Bolton, "but I doubt if we can agree on the terms. Our directors are so opposed to this system of specials that they have fixed a figure which is practically prohibitive."

"Name it," said Sir Arthur curtly.

"An engine to Peshawur will cost you two thousand rupees. No reduction from that figure will be possible."

"Can we attach our private car to it?"

"Yes; certainly."

"And will it enable us to overtake the through train before it reaches Peshawur?"

"Yes," replied the manager, glancing at the clock, "that can be done."

"Then let us have the engine at once," said Sir Arthur, producing a bulky pocket-book of red leather. "Here is a draft for the amount named on a banking house in Calcutta."

Mr. Bolton puckered his lips as though about to whistle, glanced keenly at the paper, and then deposited it in a desk drawer.

"The engine will be ready in ten minutes," he said. "If you will come down in the passenger room and wait there I will go and attend to the matter in person. I must telegraph to have the line cleared."

The manager escorted us down stairs to the general waiting room, and then hurried off on his mission.

In even less than ten minutes a small, chunky engine, having our private coach attached to it, backed into the station. It was in charge of a native engineer and fireman.

We parted on the best of terms from Colonel Wood, and were soon rattling off into the night at the rate of forty miles an hour, an excessive speed for an Indian railway. It was just twenty minutes past nine when we left Lahore. The through train had the start of us by a little more than two hours.

Now that our minds were at ease, a sense of weariness asserted itself, and we prepared for a good night's rest. In spite of the jolting of the carriage, which was considerable, we slept fairly well.

At half past three o'clock in the morning I awoke and found Sir Arthur already up and smoking a cigar.

We chatted for a while in low tones, not wishing to disturb our companions. It was still too dark to view the country that we were passing through.

Presently Sir Arthur uttered a surprised exclamation, and looking through the windows to the right, we saw a multitude of glimmering lights and a vague outline of buildings. Then we flashed by a long, low station, on the front of which, by the feeble light of a lamp that was suspended near by, we read the words:

RAWAL PINDI.

"Why, we are making splendid time," exclaimed the baronet. "We cannot be far behind the other train. Peshawur is only ninety miles from Rawal Pindi."

"That is good news," I replied. "A couple of hours, then, will see us at our journey's end."

"Yes," he answered, "if all goes well."

About fifteen minutes later our carriage began to slow up, and then halted. Through the glass door we saw the engineer and fireman jump leisurely off the engine.

"I had better go out and see what this detention means," said the baronet, when some little time had gone by.

As he started to open the door, however, the missing men returned, and we moved off again immediately.

It now began to grow dimly light, and our companions woke up and wanted to know what progress had been made.

They were all surprised to learn how close we were to Peshawur.

"When we arrive there," said Sir Arthur, "every moment will be valuable, so we had better save time by breakfasting *en route*. John, get out some biscuits and some potted ham."

Darracot promptly arranged these things on a snowy napkin, and we attacked them with avidity, for, with the exception of Colonel Wood's refreshment, we had eaten nothing since noon of the previous day.

It was now fully light, and the rugged nature of the territory through which we were traveling was plainly revealed.

The road ran between barren and gloomy hills, along the edge of trackless forests, and spanned at dizzy height many a brawling mountain torrent. The track had been poorly laid, to judge from the violent manner in which the carriage was jolted up and down.

As Sir Arthur passed along his cigar case at the conclusion of the breakfast, I observed John Darracot looking intently through the front end of the coach at the engineer and fireman, who were in plain view. Presently he turned around with a very puzzled expression on his face, which at once caught the baronet's eye.

"What is the matter, John?" he inquired.

"Well, it's just this, Sir Arthur. I believe as there's something wrong on that engine. Those ain't the same fellows what took it in charge at Lahore, and then I can see a man's leg sticking out from behind that coal box."

"Why, how can that be?" cried the baronet, now thoroughly alarmed. "There was no reason to change the engineer and fireman. Bless my soul! Darracot, you're right; there is a man's leg in sight there. Forbes, what do you think?"

"Those are not the same men," I replied, after taking a hasty glance through the window. "A change has been made at some point along the road."

"But where?" questioned Sir Arthur. "Not at Rawal Pindi, surely, for these are the same men who jumped off the engine for a moment and then returned again. And who can that third fellow be lying behind the coal box?"

We stared at each other for a moment with growing suspicion and alarm.

Suddenly Jopal Singh, who had listened keenly to the previous conversation, dashed to the side of the carriage and watched the landscape for a few seconds.

The with a hoarse cry he turned and faced us, tearing spasmodically at his hair, and trembling from head to foot with rage.

"We are betrayed. This is not the road to Peshawur that we are traveling—it is a side track that leads into the mountains."

"Then these miscreants shall pay dearly for the outrage," shouted Sir Arthur.

He dashed for the door leading to the engine and shook it violently. It was locked from the outside, and refused to

open. I hurried to the rear door, and found that in the same condition.

The influence of Baboo Das had again thwarted our plans. We were trapped.

An instinctive rush was made for our arms. Sir Arthur seized a rifle, and at one blow shattered the heavy glass over the front door.

As the splinters showered down within and without, I heard a warning cry from John Darracot, and then a flash and a report came from the engine.

A bullet entered the carriage through the broken window, and buried itself in the woodwork at the farther end. The discovery that we were under fire caused us to dodge low for a little while, and this first shot was followed by two or three more in rapid succession.

Then Chandos coolly stood up and emptied his Winchester into the engine, though with what effect the smoke prevented us from observing.

All was quiet for a time, and then I ventured to take a peep through the broken window. Not a man was in sight. The miscreants, who had by some foul means got us in their power, were sheltered in a corner of the cab, and a rough barricade

had been erected in such a manner that they could reach the motive machinery of the engine without exposing themselves to our fire. With the exception of Jopal Singh, we all remained cool under these trying circumstances. The Hindoo paced up and down the carriage, fuming with rage.

"Keep your rifles trained on the engine," directed Sir Arthur. "If you see a foot or a head, blaze away at once. We must decide on some course of action, and that very speedily."

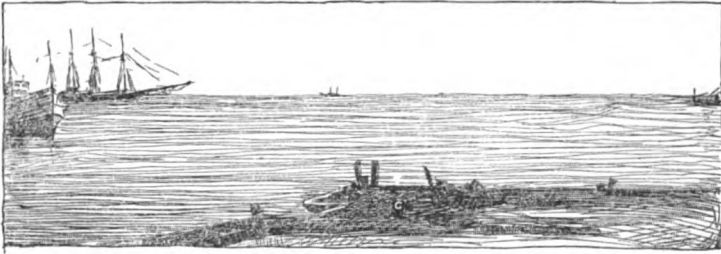
"Suppose we break open the door and capture the engine," I suggested. "It may be dangerous, but there is no other expedient possible."

"Yes, I was thinking of that," returned the baronet. "You will help me, Forbes."

We put this plan into practice at once, while Chandos and Darracot kept a close watch on the enemy, and our heavy rifle butts soon made the frail door shiver and crack.

Meanwhile we were rushing along at prodigious speed, fearing every moment we would leave the track, and roll into some yawning abyss.

(To be continued.)



THE RUDDER.

OF what are you thinking, my little lad, with the honest eyes of blue.

As you watch the vessels that slowly glide o'er the level ocean floor?

Beautiful, graceful, silent as dreams, they pass away from our view,

And down the slope of the world they go, to seek some far off shore.

They seem to be scattered abroad by chance, to move at the breeze's will,

Aimlessly wandering hither and yon, and melting in distance gray;

But each one moves to a purpose firm, and the winds their sails that fill

Like faithful servants speed them all on their appointed way.

For each has a rudder, my dear little lad, with a stanch men at the wheel,

And the rudder is never left to itself, but the will of the man is there;

There is never a moment, day or night, that the vessel does not feel

The force of the purpose that shapes her course and the helmsman's watchful care.

Some day you will launch your ship, my boy, on life's wide, treacherous sea—

Be sure your rudder is wrought of strength to stand the stress of the gale;

And your hand on the wheel, don't let it flinch whatever the tumult be,

For the will of the man, with the help of God, shall conquer and prevail.

—Ceila Thaxter.

NAPOLEON IN EGYPT.

How the ambitions of the boy became the realizations of the man—A war of conquest that left the conqueror a prisoner.

By Phillips McClure.

A BOY at school in Brienne, a little Corsican boy, set apart from his companions by his inability to speak French, and by his moody ways, dreamed over the tales of the heroes of antiquity—and the first lines were invisibly drawn which made anew the map of Europe.

Always, from his childhood, Napoleon's imagination was fired by the mysterious East. He would follow with his finger, the way of ancient conquerors on the old maps, until he left marks there, to show a future generation how his thoughts had traveled.

"They have blocked up the route of Tamerlane," he said, "but I—I will make another!"

The story of Napoleon's rise by the force of his military genius and indomitable instinct for war and for conquering, is more interesting and romantic than that of any of those old heroes whose exploits thrilled his young heart. But always, through his early campaigns, he dreamed of an Eastern conquest.

"Europe," he said to one of his generals, when he was being congratulated upon the success of his campaign in Italy, "presents no fields for glorious exploits; no great empires or revolutions are to be found but in the East, where there are six hundred millions of men."

He spoke of the hosts to conquer with a voice that the general said was softened by awe.

When the Italian campaign was over, Napoleon conferred with the astute statesman Talleyrand, and suggested carrying the campaign against Great Britain into Egypt.

England, watchful of the man she had begun to fear, fortified and set guards of war vessels about the home island, so that an attack there seemed hopeless. But if Egypt could be conquered, it would seriously hamper England in her commerce with her Indian empire.

"Once let me get into Egypt," said Napoleon, "and the Mediterranean becomes a French lake. We can bring the caravans of the East to Cairo. We can

cross the Indus, rouse the native population of India, and drive out the English. We will change the face of the world!"

It was with ideas like this that Napoleon embarked upon the Egyptian campaign.

Egypt, from being one of the great countries of the world, the mother of all the arts and sciences, had become one of the lowest. It was governed by two beys, Ibrahim and Mourad. Its standing army consisted of two hundred thousand Turks, called janizaries, and one hundred thousand Mamelukes, those proud horsemen of the desert who only rode and fought. Each horseman had two servants to perform his menial services.

In England rumor was busy with Napoleon's name. The English knew that something was brewing, and sent Nelson to the Mediterranean to watch the French fleet gathering there. Had they known that the expedition was to go to Egypt the Mamelukes might have been stirred up to preparations even had Nelson not been able to intercept the fleet on its way. Napoleon equipped the expedition with his usual thoroughness and energy. No detail was too small for him to think of and provide for.

He saw one of his ambitions about to be realized—the conquering of an old empire in the East, and the founding of a new one.

He took with him artisans of every European industry, and one hundred men learned in the sciences and arts. He took printing presses and mathematical instruments.

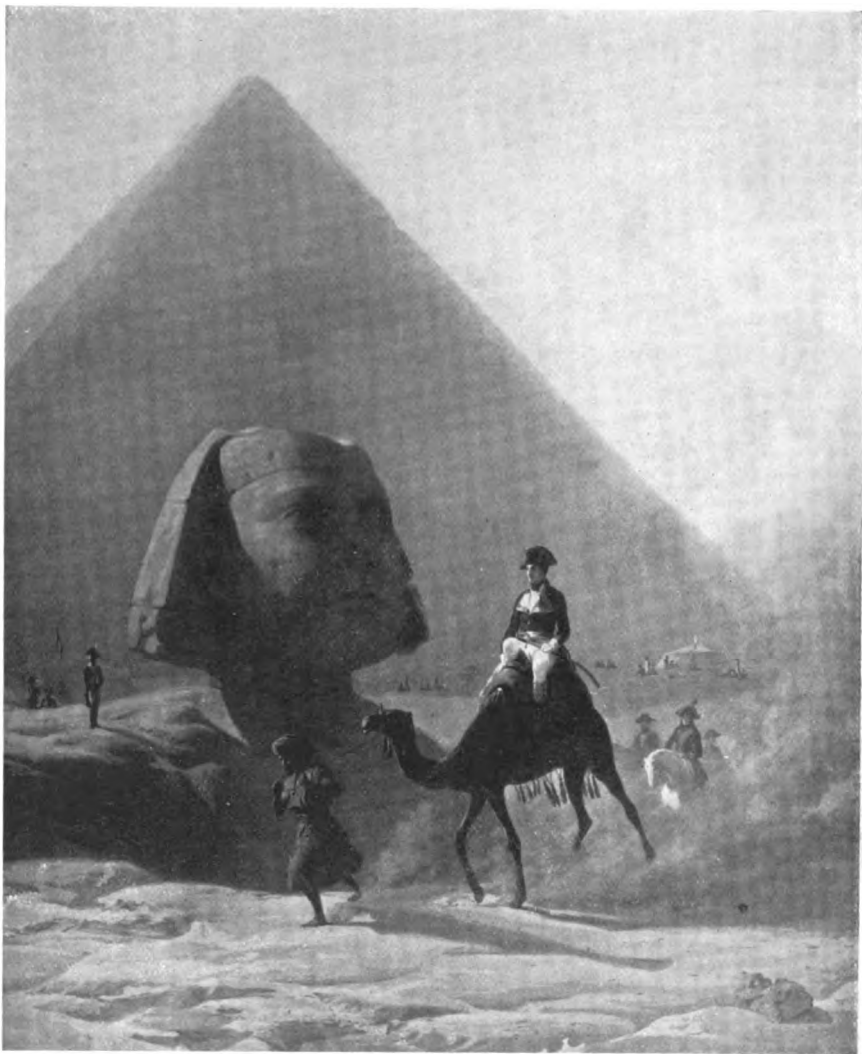
The fleet slipped from its harbor at Toulon after a storm had driven Nelson to cover, and then began a game of hide and seek across the ocean.

On the way the splendid fortress of Malta was taken. Here lived the Knights of St. John, the descendants of the Crusaders. They fired a few shots, and then laid down their arms at the name of Napoleon, many of them following him to Egypt.

He landed there on the 1st of July,



Napoleon before the Sphinx
from the painting by Jean Leon Vernet.



"Napoleon on Camel Back."

From the painting by K. Girardet.

1798, and immediately fell upon Alexandria, which was captured after a short conflict, and the tricolor of France raised from its minarets.

Napoleon seems to have had, in common with most men who believe in a destiny guiding them, a complete lack of humor, or he never could have called up the Arabs as he did here, and declared himself a Mohammedan. He asked them to remember that he had conquered the pope and the Knights of St. John, and was the enemy of Christianity. This brought a few Turks to his service against the Mamelukes.

On the 6th of July the army began the terrible march to the pyramids. The sands and brazen sky made the desert an oven, and the hearts of the best of the officers almost failed them. But at the head of the column rode the stern young leader, alert, calm, with never so much as a bead of perspiration showing upon his brow. He was going toward his goal; he gave no thought to suffering.

On the 21st of July the army reached a slight elevation, and saw lying before them the shining Nile, the pyramids, and the hosts of the Mamelukes. Napoleon, always theatric, waved his sword toward

the pyramids and cried out, "Forty generations look down upon you!"

The men were formed into squares, and to the sound of the old marches they knew so well as heralds of victory, they moved toward the foe.

The Mamelukes fell upon them with fanatical fury, but the squares stood.

Napoleon, sitting upon his horse in the center of one square, took in every detail of the scene.

He saw that the Mamelukes' cannon were not upon carriages, and that their position could not be changed. He guided the army away from them, and proceeded to attack the Mamelukes where they were unprotected.

Mourad Bey saw his design, and cried out for a sudden charge. Ten thousand Mamelukes on Arab steeds came down with their war cries, like a living avalanche, and melted into a bloody mass before the iron soldiers of France.

The Battle of the Pyramids was fought and lower Egypt was conquered.

In the mean time Nelson had encountered the French fleet at Aboukir, and totally destroyed it, thus cutting off Napoleon from his means of return.

But now he put his artisans to use. He established industries, opened old canals, and planned that cutting of the Suez Canal which made a man of a later generation famous.

Printing presses were set up, and back to Egypt came the arts she had sent out to other countries in earlier centuries.

The Turks declared war, and Napoleon started out to stop them on the borders of Egypt.

Crossing the desert with thirteen thousand men, in February 1799, he captured El-Arish and Gaza. A few days later he took Jaffa by storm.

It seemed as though in this one campaign every element of Napoleon's character would be brought out. At Jaffa he captured two thousand Turks, and being unable to take them with his army, had them led out and shot. Their bones still whiten the desert.

Here it was that Napoleon visited the hospital where lay many of his soldiers, stricken down with the plague. Even Bonaparte's hard heart was touched as he witnessed their pitiable condition, and he suggested to the physician in charge that they be given an overdose of opium to put them out of their misery. "No, general," came the reply, "my business is not to kill, but to cure!"

Napoleon reached Acre March 17, but the English defended it, and after many desperate efforts to capture it by assault, he was compelled to abandon the siege and the Syrian campaign, and return to Cairo with the loss of more than four thousand men.



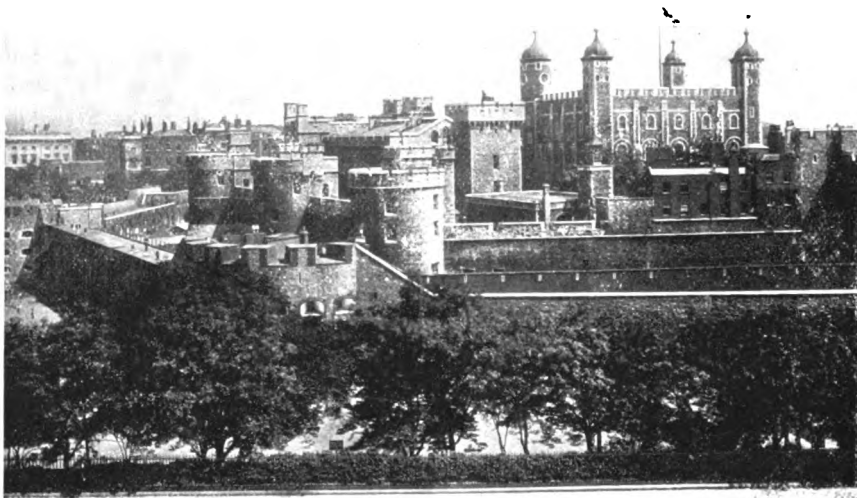
Napoleon.

From the portrait by Delaroche, painted on a snuff box.

Egypt was conquered, but what was the victory? A prison. Napoleon had not heard from Europe in ten months. In a spirit of maliciousness an English officer sent him an old newspaper, and he read that the banded armies of Europe were upon the borders of France. "I will leave Egypt," he said, "and save my country."

Leaving his army under the command of General Kleber, he rode to Alexandria, where he found two frigates, all that remained of his fine fleet.

With a few adherents he embarked and sailed away from his empire in the East to what was destined to become his greater empire in the West.



General View of the Tower.

THE TOWER OF LONDON.

A brief description of the oldest and most historic structure in England, with a glance at its past history and its present condition.

By Robert T. Hardy, Jr.

ON the northern bank of the river Thames, not far from the old London bridge, stands the Tower of London, the most celebrated monument of antiquity in England. Tourists find there a never failing source of interest, and indeed a visit to the British capital without seeing the Tower, may well be regarded as incomplete.

The entire structure occupies nearly thirteen acres, and consists of a citadel, or keep, encompassed by an outer and inner ward, the whole surrounded by a wide moat. Tower Hill, an eminence immediately adjoining the castle, was the place of execution. It was stained by some of the best and noblest blood of England.

The Tower's principal entrance is over a stone bridge at the southwest angle of the inclosure. Two drawbridges communicate with the wharf which separates the fortress from the Thames. Visitors take the most interest, however, in the entrance by water, under a strong tower, by which state prisoners were conveyed to the dungeons. It bears the truly suggestive name, the Traitors' Gate.

The origin of the Tower is uncertain. Tradition says that it was begun by the Romans, but this idea is unsupported by historical evidence. From the nature of the spot, commanding, as it does, the maritime approach to the city, as well as the city itself, it seems quite possible that the Romans, when fortifying the town, constructed some kind of a fortress there as a protection against the incursions of the barbarians.

The principal building, known as the White Tower, was probably the first fortification of much importance there erected. This majestic pile was built by Gundulph, the bishop of Rochester, for William the Conqueror, about 1080. Its name was derived from an early custom of whitening its walls.

The inner ward, which contained the royal apartments, and the most important buildings, was inclosed by a lofty stone wall, strengthened by a number of small towers, most of which remain in nearly their original state. Some of the principal towers are the Bell, the Beauchamp, the Devereux, the Flint, the Bowyer, the Brick, the Jewel, the Constable, the

Broad Arrow, the Record, and the Bloody. All are historically interesting, but space does not permit even a brief mention of them.

The history of the fortress is replete with interest, whether we consider it as a royal palace, or, as it ultimately became, a state prison. It was the final abode of many guilty, of still more merely unfortunate; of the unpitied traitor, and of many a martyr to the religious bigotry of the times. If those grim walls could speak, what tales of feudal pomp and grandeur they could tell; what tales of cruelty and suffering!

Here brave William Wallace suffered and died, with many other noble Scots. Here John de Vienne, who commanded Calais during its ever memorable siege, was brought with twelve of his principal supporters.

King John of France, and his son Philip, captured at the battle of Poitiers, were for a time confined in these walls. And here languished many a poor victim of the bloody struggle between the rival houses of Lancaster and York.

Here Henry the Sixth died, stabbed, it is said, by his unnatural relative, Richard of Gloucester. After usurping the crown, the latter caused the murder of the two little sons of Edward the Fourth, who were smothered as they slept, and buried under the foot of a staircase in the Bloody Tower.

In 1477, George, duke of Clarence, and King Edward's own brother, was, after a brief imprisonment, drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine.

In 1521, it became the prison of poor Edward, duke of Buckingham, and one of the richest and most powerful noblemen in England. He was unfortunate enough to incur the enmity of the crafty cardinal Wolsey, who made use of an incautious utterance of the duke to effect his downfall.

Here was brought the beautiful and un-

fortunate Anne Boleyn, who, the night before her death, sent to her royal husband, Henry the Eighth, thanking him for his past kindness, and saying that "he had made her, from a private gentlewoman, first a marchioness and then a queen, and now since he could raise her no



The Young Princes in the Tower.

From the painting by Sir John E. Millais.

higher on earth, was sending her to be a saint in heaven."

In 1535, Sir Thomas More, lord chancellor of the realm, was committed to the Tower on the charge of treason. At the bar of the high commission he was found guilty, and went to the block with the utmost composure.

Here also those unhappy women Lady Jane Grey and Mary Queen of Scots gave

up their lives, both "more sinned against than sinning."

The princess Elizabeth was here imprisoned during the reign of her cruel half sister, Mary Tudor. "Here landeth a true subject, O God," she cried on stepping from the barge. "Before Thee I proclaim it!"

Sir Walter Raleigh, whose name figures prominently in American history, was thrice incarcerated in the Tower, the last time for twelve years, and it was here that he wrote his history of the world. Some of the other noted prisoners of the Tower were Edward, earl of Warwick, called the last of the Plantagenets, beheaded in 1499; Thomas Cromwell, earl of Essex, 1540; Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, 1547; Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, 1552; and Henry Grey, duke of Suffolk, in 1554. Indeed, the number of these poor unfortunates is legion, and a complete record would require not pages, but volumes.

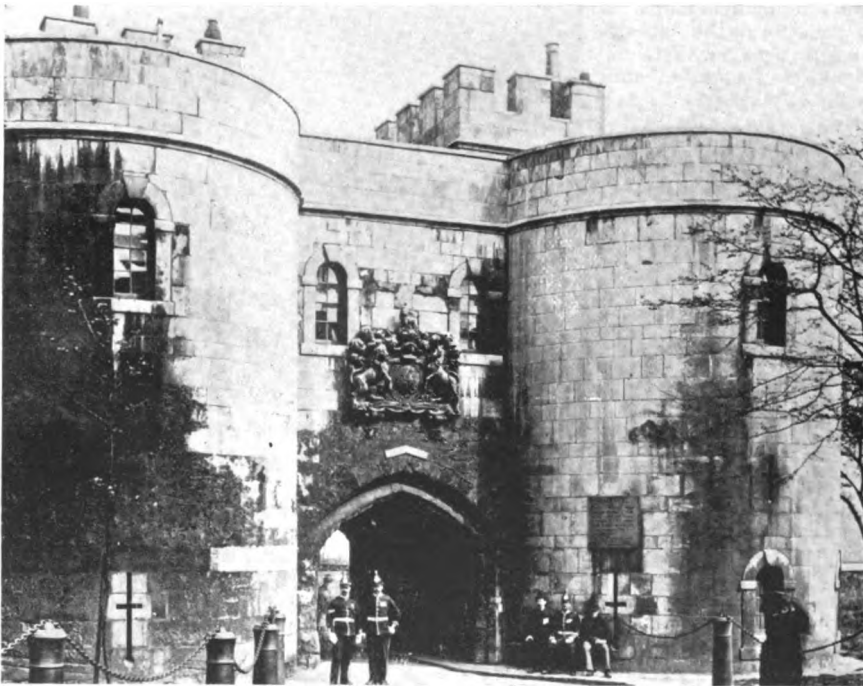
The Jewel Tower is mostly of modern construction, but little of the original building remaining. It has been a repository for the crown jewels since the time of Henry the Second. All are inclosed in glass and steel bars, and are very carefully watched. Here may be seen the various crowns, swords of state, and all

sorts of priceless regalia. Not the least interesting of the exhibits is that of the various decorations, including the celebrated Order of the Garter. Among the jewels is the Kohinoor diamond. They are superb.

A fire broke out in the Tower in 1841, and many interesting curiosities were destroyed, but there is still a remarkable collection of trophies of various dates.

The Spanish Armory is a modern building stored with weapons, instruments of torture, and other curiosities, captured from the Spaniards. The Horse Armory contains waxen figures of all the British monarchs from William the Conqueror to George the Second. They are clad in fine armor, are seated on dummy steeds, and present a grand and imposing appearance. The Small Armory contains a great variety of ancient pieces of artillery and small arms, and on the upper floor of the White Tower there is a splendid collection of armor, which was founded by Henry the Eighth.

St. Peter's Church was the sepulcher of a large number of illustrious prisoners, including Anne Boleyn, and other victims of the Tudor times. Not many years ago it was rebuilt in a very thorough manner, and with the exception of a few monuments not a trace of its former condition



Main Entrance to the Tower.

remains, a fact which rather detracts from its historical significance.

The ticket office, by which visitors enter, is on the site of the royal menagerie, which dates back to Henry the First. The collection of wild beasts was a notable one for hundreds of years and many monarchs found entertainment in witnessing conflicts between their savage pets.

Quite recently some of the cells, and a part of the Armory as well, have been closed to the public, and the visitor must content himself with peering at the interior through the grated door. Many of the cells bear inscriptions on the walls, sad mementos of their unhappy occupants.

The Yeoman Guard, the guides of the Tower, are clad in a picturesque costume of the middle ages. They are known as "Beefeaters."

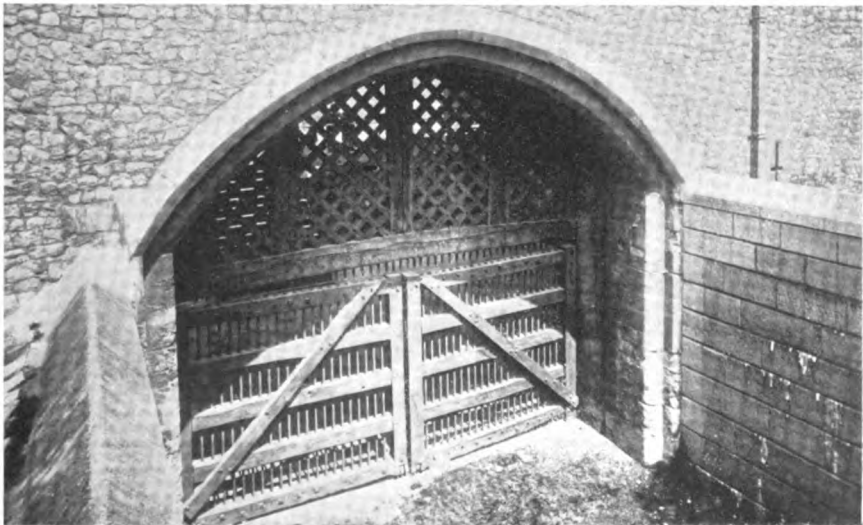
The Tower of London ceased to be a royal residence in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and today it retains comparatively few features of its former grandeur. Electric lights now illuminate its vastness, and soldiers drill in the quadrangle. The bugle call echoes through its halls. It is no longer the home of kings, or a prison for high political offenders. It is a museum, an armory, a barracks.

The fortress, once deemed impregnable, would now offer a sorry resistance to the weakest of modern ordnance. But despite this degeneration, despite modern and commonplace innovations, he who enters its huge portals cannot repress a



A "Beefeater."

feeling of awe, as he contemplates its very walls, those mute witnesses of "man's inhumanity to man."



The Traitors Gate

JOE'S CHRISTMAS FAIRY.

By A. R. Leach.

IT was in the West Virginia hills in 1888 that Joe Bland assumed the burden of taking care of the family. There were his mother and little brother and sister. Joe never counted himself; anything would do for him, but he used to lie awake at night and think of "the family."

His father had never been lucky. Some people are like that. A business will go along smoothly and beautifully until the unlucky man takes hold, and then it falls all to pieces.

Mrs. Bland had pleaded with her husband to stay in New York, where he was doing fairly well, but he heard of West Virginia, that State which has all the characteristics of a new country in the midst of an old one, and he determined to go down there and make a fortune. There was timber on the hills that could be cut and sold.

Mr. Bland had some acquaintances in Boston who had made fortunes in West Virginia timber. They had bought the



In the second of lifting the gun to his shoulder, Joe saw a Christmas dinner and Christmas presents for all.

land on speculation, and the timber they cut had paid for it. Then there was always the possibility of striking oil. When he had the timber all cleared off, and owned a beautiful farm, then he would bore for oil.

He did not listen to his wife when she reminded him that there were a great many West Virginians who were not rich, nor did he take the precaution of going to West Virginia to look at his land before he purchased it.

One of the Boston acquaintances had a "beautiful tract, right in the oil belt," to sell "at a bargain," and Mr. Bland drew the nest egg out of the bank, and bought it.

When they moved down they found the land in the oil belt, indeed. It had been prospected all over for oil, and the dry holes, with the rough, skeleton-like derricks rising above them, showed dismally through the trees here and there.

There was plenty of timber, but it mostly grew on hillsides where the patient oxen were obliged to turn and go backward to get down. In many places the logs were let down by chains to keep them from piling up in inaccessible ravines.

There were no houses, no schools. Only a lonely little cabin perched on a hillside.

It was here that Mr. Bland died of a fever the third year. Fever, the doctor said, but discouragement was his wife's name for it, and Joe was left at fourteen to be the man of the house.

He had much of his mother's calmness and judgment, and with her help and advice they pulled along somehow, until 1890. And then there was no money to pay the mortgage on the place, the little potato crop had failed, the corn was late and small, and Christmas was upon them. The first of January the mortgage would be due.

The day before Christmas Joe put a piece of bread in his pocket, took an axe and a gun, and started out. The children were sitting by the fire stringing red wintergreen berries and white popcorn for the little evergreen tree Joe had cut and brought in.

"It's so awfully far out here, I don't suppose Santa Claus ever *will* find the way," Matey, the eight year old boy, was saying. "I just wish sometimes we *did* live nearer."

There was a wistful little sigh in the voice. He was hoarse, because his shoes had holes in them, and he couldn't be kept in out of the snow.

"I ain't afraid he won't come—with a little," little Jessie added. "Of course he can't carry *much* all this way. But he can carry a *little*. He did last year."

It nearly broke Joe's heart. He knew that there wasn't even the *little* this year. He remembered the gay Christmases he used to have back in New York, when he was like Matey and Jessie, and then he said,

"Poor father," under his breath, almost with a sob. He had thought that he was doing everything for the children.

"Where are you going, Joe?" his mother called from the kitchen window.

"Out to cut some wood. Maybe I can kill a rabbit or two, for dinner tomorrow."

But he doubted it. The woods were pretty well cleared of game, and there wasn't a scrap of meat in the house. Even the last chicken had been sold when Matey had the measles.

"It's ridiculous," Joe said to himself. "Here we are, with all this land, hundreds of acres, and not enough to eat—to *eat*. I must be a poor manager some way. Somebody ought to buy the timber. But there's more timber here than anybody wants on earth, I guess."

Joe didn't say so even to himself, but he knew why his mother had not been able to make any contracts with the lumber companies. The largest dealer was the man who held the mortgage, and he meant to hold it until the land belonged to him. Then the timber would be cut fast enough.

"Fighting a woman and a boy," Joe thought; "and I suppose it will all be gone before I am able to fight back."

Only eight days—and then he would be homeless indeed. It was a heavy load for a boy of sixteen to be carrying the day before Christmas.

On his way to the clearing, Joe passed half a dozen men. They were not of the type of mountaineers. He could see at a glance that they belonged to the town. They were dressed in rough clothing, and some carried guns, while others had hammers and long coils of something like rope.

They were coming away from one of the derricks. They did not notice Joe, and he went on, wondering what they were doing.

Lee, the man to whom the place was mortgaged, was with them. Doubtless he had already made arrangements for the erection of one of the primitive saw mills, and an inclined plane to carry the lumber to the river, poor Joe thought bitterly. It would be his in eight days, any way. Lee might have waited.

Then the idea came to Joe that he might get work at the saw mill and keep the family from starving. There was a silver lining to the cloud. Maybe it was best that the land should go now. They never could have managed to get the tract into self supporting, working order.

Joe always looked at a thing philosophically. He put his gun down and went to work with a will at the two trees he selected to cut down. It made the blood tingle through his veins, and sent a cheerful rush through his heart. The sun shone. He could keep the family warm, any way.

Surely Lee would let them go on living in the cabin, which had grown to be home in these five years, and he would do

something! Of course he would do something. Joe brought the axe down against the ash tree with a vim, and the chips flew. It was a joy to hear the trunk crack, and then reel and crash over, its springy boughs bouncing on the snow. He would cut down another, and then get an ox and haul them home to be cut up.

The next one was larger, and he had only made his way a short distance into the trunk, when he heard an ominous growl behind him. A dog, he thought, and turned.

For an instant he could not believe the evidence of his own eyes. Waddling down over the snow was a large black bear, mischief in its little eyes.

It had been years since a bear had been seen in those hills; never since the Blands came. Joe remembered seeing one in Central Park when he was a little fellow, and in a flash he recollected that bear meat was good to eat, and a bear skin was worth money. In the second of lifting his gun to his shoulder he saw a Christmas dinner for "the kids," and Christmas presents for their little darning stockings.

The town was eighteen miles away, but Joe knew he could get there some way between that and morning. And then, as he pulled the trigger, he realized that his gun was only a single barreled shot gun, and that instead of having a weapon with which to kill a bear, he stood in danger of his life, and then—he blazed away.

But shot or bullet, the charge in the bear's face did not please him. He hesitated, growled, and turned heavily about on his fat haunches, and trotted back the way he had come.

Then Joe's pluck and desperation asserted themselves. He ran after the bear, his gun held like a club in his hand. Surely a funnier sight was never seen: a bear running away from a boy with an axe in one hand (he had snatched it as he ran) and a gun in the other, calling frantically upon the bear to stop.

Joe had no sense of fear, only anger at the beast for robbing him of that second's dream of a Christmas for the family.

But a loping bear can make pretty good time when heavy wet snow clogs and balls on a boy's boots, and presently Joe saw him take refuge in a sort of cave in a hill-side, just under one of the old derricks.

By this time the boy was in a fever of excitement. He threw down the gun, and

keeping a hold upon the axe, he felt in his pocket for matches.

The sun had melted the snow from the old derrick, and it was as dry as tinder. He would burn the bear out, and kill him with the axe. He believed that he had more than half blinded him by the load of shot, any way.

Joe took the axe and chopped away at one of the derrick supports until he had a little pile of chips, and then he took one of his two matches and striking it under the hollow of his hand tried to set the chips into a flame: but the wind blew them out, leaving only a spark.

Joe was afraid to try the other match. Off at a little distance was a branch of oak, from which a few dry leaves fluttered.

Joe went after these. He reached up his hand, and he never knew how it happened, but there was an explosion which seemed to rock the very center of the earth, and he was thrown far off into the snow, while leaping, tearing, roaring, up through the air went a great red flame.

Joe was stunned for a minute, and then rushing by him came Lee and the other men, yelling, mad with excitement.

"It's here! It's here! It's found! How did it happen?" They could not talk fast enough. Only Lee seemed put out.

Joe pulled himself out of the snow, and stood by, looking at the wonder, and then he gathered what had happened.

His old oil well had become an outlet for a reservoir of natural gas, and his match had set the stream on fire.

There had been rumors that there was gas out here, and the men had come prospecting for a likely place to bore for it, with Lee keeping them away from Mrs. Bland's cabin until after the first of January. But the bear had led Joe straight to the find.

"There's millions in it," one of the men said to Joe hours after, when all the plans had been made with his mother. "You've lighted up a Christmas tree that will bear fruit a good many years."

That was four years ago. The great flame has been piped away and used to create a little city. The Blands live on Central Park, and Joe played in Yale's football game this year.

But Matey and Jessie still believe that the bear was a Christmas fairy that came out of the woods in the good old fashioned story book way, to lead the good boy to fortune.



CHRISTMAS IN YE OLDEN TIME.

AS we hear of the revels and ceremonies and wild gaities of early Christmases, it gives us a sense of loss in the machine made Christmas of today. There may be more sweet Christian charity on the earth, more real good will toward men, but the heartiness of the old observances was full of the life and jollity we all love.

The Christmas of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries began on the 16th of December and lasted until the 6th of January, which is Twelfth Night; and even today we have little superstitions about leaving the wreaths of ivy and holly and mistletoe on the walls until after the latter date.

In All Hallow E'en, a Lord of Misrule was chosen, and his sway extended through the holidays. He chose his own court and turned everything topsy turvy according to his own sweet will. His reign was a revival of the Roman festival of the Saturnalia, and it was the Puritans, who abominated all such heathen practices, who finally drove him out of England. But he was a picturesque figure while he lasted.

The boar's head, which was part of the Christmas feast, was borne in by the Lord of Misrule, and set solemnly before the assembled guests.

The tables must be loaded throughout the holiday with Christmas pies, poultry, sirloins, and plum puddings, and all who came were welcomed. There were also ornamental dishes which were served before the lord of the house. One of these was the "stately pye."

In the days of chivalry the knights took their vows at the solemn Christmas feast, and were presented with a roasted peacock on a golden dish. The peacock was first carefully skinned and then roasted. The skin was then put back, and sewed on, the beak gilded and the tail spread, and the whole carried in, in state.

The great night of revel was Christmas Eve. Then the Yule log was brought in with joyous songs. If a child had been born in the house during the year, he rode in on the log. It was dragged to the hearth and lighted with a brand taken from the log of the year before. Then the games began.

The Lord of Misrule set before the company a wide, shallow dish, whose bottom had been strewn with raisins. Over these was poured brandy, which was set on fire.

Everybody tried to get out the fruit without burning his fingers.

There was another game which consisted in floating apples in hot wine. In this case they must be taken out with the teeth, and a sorry sight the gallants made, their faces dripping with the scalding liquor.

"Blind Man's Buff" and "Puss in the Corner" are two games that were played by command of the Lord of Misrule.

When midnight came on Christmas Eve, the "Waits" went through every village singing carols. The ones that we know best are still sung:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay."

And that other:

"And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning."

There were Yule candles in those old days, made so large and heavy, of "fayre waxe," that they would burn for twelve days; but the twinkling lights of the Christmas tree were unknown. The tree which bears the fruit of gifts was only introduced into England at a comparatively recent date. It was in Germany that Christmas first became the festival of children.

In the Fatherland of the olden time the "Knight Rupert," dressed in flowing white robes, went from house to house, bearing gifts, saying that Christ, his master, had sent him,

The house was made dark at his approach, and the children stood clinging to their mothers in awe, while the Christ messenger lighted the tapers on the Christmas tree, bringing out its glories before their eyes.

Christmas in those old days was taken by conspirators as the hour to strike. They could conceal under its mummery, and a pretense of joking, the deepest designs. There were seven of the great conspiracies in Europe that hid under the cloak of the holy time.

THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN.*

By W. Bert Foster,

Author of "A Mountain Mystery," "The Treasure of Southlake Farm," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

WHILE returning from South Africa the brig Silver Swan is driven upon a reef by a storm.

Believing the vessel lost, the crew take to the boats but are swamped, and all perish except the captain, Horace Tarr; the mate, Caleb Wetherbee; and two seamen. The survivors construct a raft and leave the brig to her fate.

Captain Tarr has been severely injured during the wreck, and dies soon after, leaving with the mate papers for his son, Brandon, telling of a package of diamonds concealed on the brig, which were left to the captain by his brother, who died in Africa.

One of the sailors dies, but the other, Jim Leroyd, and the mate are rescued by a passing vessel. The mate is sent to the hospital, but Leroyd, who has seen the captain give Wetherbee the papers,

has better withstood the privations, and sets out to find the boy Brandon, whom he suspects has already received the papers from the mate.

Brandon Tarr is living with his uncle Arad, an old miser, at Chopmist, Rhode Island, where Leroyd finds him. Introducing himself as Caleb Wetherbee the sailor tries to find out what the captain has written, but fails, as the boy does not know. After the sailor's departure Brandon finds a newspaper clipping which Leroyd has dropped, from which he learns that the Silver Swan has been reported to the Hydrographic Office as a derelict. This, combined with what the sailor has told him, makes him suspect the true state of affairs.

Brandon determines to go in search of the derelict brig, and informs his uncle that he intends leaving him, but without stating his object.

The boy is very useful to him, however, so old Arad has no intention of allowing him to go if he can prevent it, so he calls on Squire Holt, the village justice, to get legal control over Brandon during his minority. On his way the old man meets Leroyd, who tells him what he suspects, and proposes that they join forces.

Old Arad's interview with Holt results in the

latter's promising to call that evening to talk to Brandon on the error of his ways.

Returning home the miser stops at the post office, and there finds a letter for Brandon, which he opens. He finds that it is from Caleb Wetherbee, and that it confirms Leroyd's story.

That evening the squire calls.

CHAPTER VIII—(Continued).

IN WHICH BRANDON PURSUES HIS INTENTION OF LEAVING THE FARM, AND DEFILES UNCLE ARAD AND HIS ALLY.

"YOUNG man," began the judge severely, "your uncle, Mr. Tarr, who has done so much for you for the past four years, tells me that you have made a sorry return for all his kindness and bounty."

"In what?" demanded Brandon rather sharply, for he considered this interference on the justice's part as wholly uncalled for.

"Is *that* the way you speak to your elders, young man?" cried the judge, aghast. "Have you no respect for gray hairs?"

"I do not see why I should respect *you*, Mr. Holt," replied Don, with some temper. "You've never given me cause to and I consider that your questions and remarks are entirely unwarranted. I propose to go away from my uncle's house (to whom, by the way, my father paid three dollars per week board for me up to last fall, and for whom I have done the work of a regularly hired hand during most of the time I have been here) I propose to go away, I say, and nothing *you* or uncle can say will stop me!"

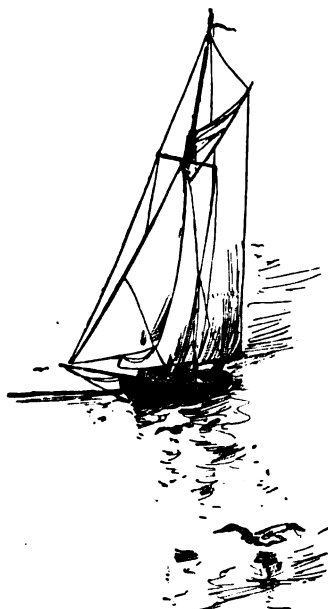
"Hoighty toighty, young man!" cried the judge; "do you realize to whom you are speaking?"

"Yes, I do," responded Brandon hotly. "To one who is known, far and wide, as the meanest man in Scituate!"

The judge's ample nasal organ flushed to the color of a well grown beet; but before he could reply old Arad put in *his* oar:

"What d'ye mean, ye little upstart?" (Fancy his calling Brandon *little*, who already stood a good three inches taller than himself!) "What d'ye mean, sayin' that I was ever paid fur yer keep?"

*The first 8 chapters of this story appeared in the November issue of THE ARGOSY, which will be forwarded to any address on receipt of 10 cents.



Ye've been nuthin' but an expense an' trouble ter me ever since ye come here."

"That's an untruth, and you know it," declared Don, who had quite lost his temper by this time, and did not behave himself in just the manner I should have preferred my hero to behave; but Brandon Tarr was a very human boy, and, I have found, heroes are much like other folks and not by any means perfect.

"Young man, mark my words!" sputtered "Square" Holt, "you will yet come to some bad end."

"I'll git all this aout o' ye, afore I'm done with ye, Brandon Tarr," declared Uncle Arad, "if I hev ter hire somebody ter lick ye."

"You wouldn't do that—you're too stingy to hire anybody to 'lick' me," responded Don tartly. "Now I don't propose to listen to any more of this foolishness. I'm going away, and I'm going away tomorrow morning. I've eaten my last meal at this house, Uncle Arad!"

"Is that the way to speak to your guardian?" said the judge, with horror in his tone. "Mr. Tarr, you are too lenient with this young scoundrel. He should be sent to the State reform school as I suggested."

"But then I wouldn't get no work aout o' him," the farmer hastened to say. "I—I've got ter git the money back I've spent on him, ye know."

Brandon laughed scornfully.

"I should like to know by what right you call him my guardian, Mr. Holt?" he asked.

"Wal, I'm goin' ter be yer guardeen—right off," Arad hastened to inform him, before the "square" could reply. "The square's goin' ter make the papers aout ter oncet."

"They'll be funny looking documents, I reckon," said Don, in disgust. "I understand that Mr. Holt has done several pretty crooked things since he's been in office, but this is going a little too far."

"Young man!" cried the judge, trying to wither the audacious youth with a glance.

But Don didn't "wither" at all.

"If you know anything at all about law," he said to the judge, with sarcasm, "you know that a guardian can't be appointed in an hour. Legal notice must be given and reason shown *why* a guardian should be appointed. I've no property, and Uncle Arad only wants to control me so as to have my work. And, besides all that, I am old enough to choose my own guardian, and you can bet your last cent that I shouldn't choose Arad Tarr."

"It ain't so! 'tain't no sich thing, is it, square?" cried old Arad, in alarm, "Ain't I th' proper person to be 'p'inted over my own nevv'y? Ther' ain't nobody else got anythin' ter do with it."

"He can tell you what he likes," responded Brandon quickly; "but I've given you the facts. Now I've heard enough of

this, and I'm going to bed." Then he added, turning to Holt: "When you go out to fleece a lamb next time, Mr. Holt, be pretty sure that the lamb is just as innocent as you think it."

He turned away without another word then and left the kitchen, mounting to his bedroom in the second story of the old house, leaving the baffled conspirators in a state of wrathful bewilderment.

CHAPTER IX.

SHOWING HOW THE "SQUARE'S" WRATH IS ROUSED, IT LIKEWISE INTRODUCES

STILL ANOTHER LETTER

FROM NEW YORK.

"MR. TARR," declared the judge, when Brandon had, for the moment, so successfully routed them and retired, "you are doing a very wrong thing in shielding that young reprobate from the reform school. That's where he belongs. Send him there, sir, send him there!"

"I never thought he'd ha' shown disrespect fur the law," gasped Uncle Arad weakly.

"Disrespect!" cried the judge. "I never was so insulted in all my life. That boy will be hung yet, you mark my words!"

"I never thought it of Brandon," said the farmer, shaking his head.

He seemed quite overcome to think that his nephew had dared defy the law, or its representative. To Uncle Arad the law was a very sacred thing; he always aimed to keep within its pale in his transactions.

"You'll never be able to do anything with that boy here," declared "Square" Holt. "A strait jacket is the only thing for him."

"But if he goes there what'll be the use o' my bein' his guardeen?" queried Arad.

Then he hesitated an instant as a new phase of the situation came to him.

"If Brandon was under lock an' key—jes' where I c'd put my han' on him when I wanted him—I c'd go right erbout this 'ere treasure business, an' git it fur—fur *him*," he thought, yet shivering in his soul at the thought of the wrong he was planning to do his nephew.

"I—I dunno but ye're right, square," he said quaveringly. "I—I don' wanten see th' boy go right ter perdition, 'fore my very eyes, as ye might say, an' if ye think the reformin' influences o' the institution is what he needs—"

"The best thing in the world for him," declared the judge, drawing on his driving gloves. "The *only* thing, I might say, that will keep him out of jail—where he belongs, the young villain!"

"But—but haow kin it be fixed up?" asked Arad, in some doubt.

"You leave that to me," said the judge pompously. "I'll show that young reprobate that he has defied the wrong man when he defies *me*. I'll give him all the law

he wants—more, perhaps, than he bargained for."

"But s'pose he tries to run away in th' mornin', as he threatened?"

"All you've got to do, Mr. Tarr," said the judge, shaking one long finger at the farmer, "is to keep a close watch on that young man. Don't give him a chance to run away. Lock him into his room tonight and keep him there till we can—er, hem!—straighten this out. I think it will be a very easy matter to place the case before the court in such manner that the necessity for immediate action will be at once admitted."

"Why," declared the judge, warming up to his subject, "I wonder, sir, how you—an old man" (Uncle Arad winced at that), "and in feeble health—have been able to remain here alone with that young scoundrel all this winter. I wonder that he has not laid violent hands on you."

"Wal, he *has* been some abusive, square, but I wouldn't say nothin' erbout that," said Uncle Arad hesitatingly.

"Don't compound villainy by shielding it," responded the judge, with righteous indignation. "This matter has already gone too far. When our quiet town is to be aroused and made a scene of riot, such as has been enacted—er—*here* tonight, sir, it is time something was done. Such young hoodlums as this Brandon Tarr should be shut up where they will do no harm to either their friends or neighbors."

"If I had *my* way," added the judge viciously, "I'd shut up every boy in town in the reform school!"

Then he marched out to his carriage, and Uncle Arad, after locking the door, sat down to think the matter over.

If he was successful in his nefarious plan of shutting Brandon up in the reformatory institution of the State, the getting of the diamonds, which Captain Tarr had hidden aboard the Silver Swan, would be all plain sailing.

Of course he would have to lose Brandon's work on the farm; but he had seen, by the boy's open defiance of "Square" Holt, that he cared nothing for the law—or its minion—and Uncle Arad dared not allow his nephew out of his sight for fear he would run away.

To his mind there was very little doubt that the attempt to shut Brandon up would be successful. Judge Holt was a most powerful man (politically) in the town, and he would leave no stone unturned to punish the youth who had so fearlessly defied him.

Judge Holt, although disliked by many of his townsmen who realized that some of his methods and actions were illegal, still swayed the town on election days, and carried things with a high hand the remainder of the year. Old Arad chuckled to think how easily Brandon's case would be settled by the doughty "square."

Then, remembering the suggestion the

judge had made just before his departure, he rose hastily from his chair and quietly ascended to the floor above. Here Brandon and himself slept in two small bedrooms on opposite sides of the hall.

The doors were directly opposite each other, and, although such things as locks were unknown in the house on any except the outside doors, the old man quickly lit upon a scheme that he thought remarkably clever.

He obtained a piece of stout clothes line and fastened it back and forth from handle to handle of the two bedroom doors, which, opening into their respective rooms, were now arranged so that the occupants of neither apartment could open the portals.

Then, chuckling softly over his sharp trick, the old farmer crept down the stairs once more to the kitchen, feeling moderately sure of finding Brandon in his room in the morning.

But one narrow window, looking out upon the barnyard, was in his nephew's apartment, and as the sash had long since been nailed in, and the shutters closed on the outside, Uncle Arad felt secure on this score.

"I'll starve him inter submission, ef I can't do it no other way," he muttered angrily.

Seating himself once more in his old armchair, he drew forth the two letters obtained that day at the post office, adjusted his steel bowed spectacles which, in a moment of extravagance, he had purchased of a traveling peddler, and opened the epistle from his brokers which, heretofore, he had not read.

He slit the envelope carefully with the blade of his jack knife. More than one man had torn or otherwise mutilated a check by opening an envelope too carelessly.

But instead of the printed form and generous draft which was the usual monthly inclosure of the firm, all the envelope contained was a typewritten letter, which the old farmer read with something like horror:

Office of
BENSELL, BENSELL & MARSDEN,
513 Wall St., New York,
April 2, 1892.

MR. ARAD TARR,
CHOPMIST, RHODE ISLAND.

Dear Sir:

We beg to announce that owing to several accidents, causing a large loss of rolling stock of the road, the B. P. & Q. has dropped several points on the market and has passed its monthly dividend.

We would suggest that you hold on to your stock, however, as this is a matter which will quickly adjust itself.

Yours sincerely,
BENSELL, BENSELL & MARSDEN.

The letter fluttered to the floor from Uncle Arad's nerveless fingers. To lose money was like losing his very life, and this was no inconsiderable sum that had

gone. He had invested a large amount in B. P. & Q. stock, and up to the present time it had paid large interest.

"Them brokers air thieves! I know they be," cried the old man, breaking forth into vituperations against the innocent firm of Bensell, Bensell & Marsden. "Ye can't trust 'em—not an inch! I don't b'lieve none o' their lyin' stories erbout the railroad's passin' its div'dend. I—I'll go ter New York m'self, I declare I will!"

He got up and paced the floor wrathfully.

"Jes' as soon as I git this matter o' Brandon's settled, an' git th' farm work started with Jim Hemin'way fur foreman, I'll go. I ain't ergoin' ter be cheated bare faced like this 'ere."

Then he thought a moment, and pulling Caleb Wetherbee's letter from its envelope again, read it once more carefully.

"I—I might look inter this w'ile I was there, too," he muttered slowly. "I reckon I kin fin' thet feller I saw terday—Leroyd, his name was, an' his address was New England Hotel, Water Street. I shan't furgit thet right off."

He shook his head slowly, thrust both letters into his pocket, and then shambling off to bed in the room off the kitchen as, having locked his nephew in, he had also locked himself out of his usual bed chamber.

CHAPTER X.

RELATING HOW UNCLE ARAD MADE AN ERROR
IN HIS CALCULATIONS, IT ALSO TELLS
OF BRANDON'S ARRIVAL AT
THE METROPOLIS.

LONG habit had made Uncle Arad Tarr an extremely early riser, and it had been his custom to arouse Brandon as early as half past three or four during the summer months, and never later than five thirty in winter. On the morning after he had fastened the door of his nephew's room, however, the old man did not seek to disturb the boy, but rising himself before five he went about the customary duties of the house and barn.

In this work he missed Brandon sadly; but having made up his mind that the boy was bound to leave him any way, old Arad was determined that he should go to the reform school, and therefore he would have to learn to do without his valuable services.

To his unsophisticated mind, it seemed a very simple matter indeed for a powerful local politician like "Square" Holt to send his nephew to the State reformatory institution, "and no questions asked."

But under our present system of humane laws, and with our enlightened legal executives, an undeserved incarceration in prison or reform school is seldom known—outside of story books. Judge Holt was a large man in his own community (and in

his own estimation) but he had never been beyond that community far enough to learn how very small a man he really was.

After the arduous labor of feeding the stock and poultry, drawing water and bringing in wood, old Arad hardly felt equal to either the task of preparing breakfast, or eating the same; but he did at last sit down to what he termed "a cold snack" about seven o'clock.

"That 'ere boy sleeps like a pig," he muttered, with a groan, twisting about in his chair to get an easy position for his rheumatic limbs. "I wonder he hain't begun er-kickin' on th' door, er suthin', yit."

At that moment there was a noise behind him, and turning about he beheld the subject of his thoughts standing in the doorway leading to the floor above.

Uncle Arad gave a shout expressing surprise and anger, and sprang to his feet. Brandon had been surveying him coolly, with a smile on his face, and now he laughed outright.

"Good morning, uncle," he said.

He was fully dressed in his best suit, hat, overcoat and all, and carried a traveling bag in his hand.

"How—how did ye git aout?" sputtered Uncle Arad, in wonder.

"How did I get out?"

"Yes—haow did ye git aouto' yer room?" cried the old man.

"I wasn't in, therefore I didn't have to get out," responded Brandon calmly.

"Ye warn't in?" repeated his bewildered relative.

"That's what I said. I wasn't in. When you crawled up stairs last night and took all that trouble with the clothes line, I wasn't in my room at all. I expected some such delicate attention as that on your part, uncle, so I took the trouble to remove my things to the spare room at the other end of the hall, and slept there."

The farmer fairly gnashed his teeth in rage.

"Where be yeou goin'?" he demanded, planting himself between his nephew and the door.

"Why, uncle, I thought you knew that," said Brandon, raising his eyebrows in apparent surprise. "I told you last night that I was going to New York. I haven't changed my mind since then, though I've modified my plans somewhat. It's such a pleasant morning, I believe I'll walk down to Rockland, take the stage from there to Hope, and go to town on the train."

"Yeou will, hey? Wal, I guess not!"

Old Arad backed up against the door as though to guard that way of escape. His lean form was trembling with excitement, and he was really in a pitiable state for so old a man.

"Think not, eh?" said Brandon coolly.

He came into the kitchen and deposited his traveling bag on a chair, and then stepped across the room and took his rifle

down from the two hooks upon which it rested.

Old Arad uttered a shout of alarm and darted away from the door to the opposite side of the table.

"Goodness me! would you shoot me?" he gasped, fairly white to his lips.

"Don't be a fool, uncle," responded Brandon with asperity, opening the hall door again and bringing in a gun case which had been standing in the corner of the other apartment. "The rifle isn't loaded, and, besides, what do you suppose I'd want to shoot you for?"

"Oh, you young villain, you!" groaned old Arad, paying for his agile movements of the moment before by several rheumatic twinges.

"Thanks! Well, uncle, I guess I'll be off. I don't suppose you'll shake hands with a fellow?" and Brandon stopped, with his hand on the door latch.

"I'll have ye a'rested afore ye git ter Rockland!" the old man shouted, shaking his clenched fist at him.

"You'd better not try it," the boy declared, with flashing eyes.

Arad followed him outside, sputtering.

"Ye'll live ter rue this day, ye young villain!" he cried. "I'll show ye no mercy."

"All right; it's all the same to me," Brandon returned, and whistling cheerfully, he went out of the gate and started down the road with his burden of traveling bag and gun case.

It was a beautiful morning, despite the rain of the day before. True, there were puddles of muddy water standing in the road and patches of dirty snow in the fence corners and under the hedges. But these drawbacks did not serve to cloud either the clear azure sky or Brandon's bright hopes.

Looking back at the old farm house once, before turning the bend in the road, he had a glimpse of old Arad driving furiously out of the yard.

"He's going to see his familiar spirit, Holt," muttered Don, with a smile, "and lots of good may it do him. I'll be in town before they catch me, and Judge Ebenezer Holt isn't anywhere near as big a man in town as he is here. I'll risk all the harm they can do me now."

He arrived at Rockland in time for the stage to Hope, and at the latter village took the train for Providence. Neither his uncle nor Holt had appeared, and he made up his mind that he was well rid of them.

Once aboard the cars he settled himself back in his seat, and drew forth the scrap of newspaper which had dropped from the old sailor's note case the day before. He read it through again carefully.

"I've got nearly fifty dollars (wouldn't uncle be crazy if he knew it?) and although that isn't a fortune, still it ought to keep me for some time," he thought. "But, the question is, after I pump all I can out of that Wetherbee, what had I better do?"

He mused a moment in silence, and then took up the connected train of his reflections again.

"Fifty dollars ought to last me quite a spell—and take me quite a way, too. Of course, I can't hire a boat in New York to go in search of the Silver Swan with it; but I can watch the Hydrographic Office reports, and find out in what general direction the brig's headed. Then I'll get as near to her as possible and see—what I shall see!

"I'd give a cent" (probably he would have given a good deal more) "if this Wetherbee was a different sort of a man. It's a mystery to me how father ever trusted the fellow. I always supposed that father had a keen insight into human nature; but a man will be deceived at times, I suppose.

"But I won't let this treasure idea keep me from going to work, and working hard, too. If I don't get the money, why I don't want to be roaming about the world like Uncle Anson, with nothing to do in life but hunt for wealth. I believe I'll get a place on some vessel any way, for there's a good deal of the sailor in me as there was in father. We get it from grandfather's folks—the Brandons—I suppose."

He arrived at Providence before noon, and spent the time until evening in looking about the business portion of the city, and especially about the wharves. Then late in the afternoon he took the cars for New York, arriving in the metropolis at such an hour that to go to a hotel near the station seemed necessary.

Although a country boy by bringing up, Brandon was not easily disturbed by the magnitude of life in the great city. In fact, he rather enjoyed it, and after retiring to his room at the hotel, he went to sleep without one apprehensive thought of what the morrow might bring forth.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEREIN BRANDON VISITS THE FIRM OF
ADONIRAM PEPPER & CO., AND MR.

ALFRED WEEKS GIVES AN EXHIBITION OF ACCOMPLISHED
EAVESDROPPING.

LEAVING his bag and gun case at the hotel, Brandon Tarr started out by nine o'clock on the following morning, his first aim being to find and interview the sailor who had already visited Chopmist for the purpose of seeing him.

"Caleb Wetherbee, New England Hotel, Water Street," was the address, and after considerable inquiry he found the street in question.

It was, however, the Battery end of it and no one seemed to know anything about the New England Hotel. Still, Don was not dismayed and pursued his way, keeping his eyes open and himself alert among

the many new sights and sounds of the metropolis.

The locality grew worse as he pursued his way, but he was not to be frightened off by gangs of street gamins, or crowds of half drunken men and women. Still, in these days, Water Street isn't as bad as it was once—at least, not by daylight.

As he wandered along he could see down the cross streets to the wharves and water beyond, where all sorts and conditions of seagoing craft were gathered from all parts of the world. He sniffed the sea breeze, too, which, to him, killed all the odor of the filth about him.

"That's what I want to be—a sailor," he muttered.

Just then something caught his eye and he stopped motionless on the sidewalk.

On the opposite side of the street (the river side) as though crowded off Front Street by its more pretentious neighbors, was the office of a shipping firm. It was in a low brick building, dingy and dirty as were the structures about it, and a much battered sign over the door read:

ADONIRAM PEPPER & CO.,
SHIPPING MERCHANTS.

The name was what attracted Brandon's attention first. He had heard his father speak of it and of the man who was "Adoniram Pepper & Co.," and from his description he had a desire to see this eccentric personage.

Perhaps, also, Mr. Pepper would know the locality of the New England Hotel, and therefore Brandon crossed the street and entered the dingy little front office.

On a high stool by a high desk just beside the window, sat a man with a wonderful development of leg, a terrific shock of the reddest hair imaginable, and a shrewd, lean face, lit up by sharp, foxy eyes. His face was smoothly shaven and the yellow skin was covered with innumerable wrinkles like cracks in the cheeks of a wax doll; but whether this individual was twenty five, or fifty five, Brandon was unable to guess.

The man (a clerk, presumably) looked up with a snarl at Brandon's appearance.

"Well, what do *you* want?" he demanded.

"Is the firm in?" asked Don, almost laughing in the other's face, for the red haired clerk had a huge daub of ink on the bridge of his nose and another on his shirt front.

"I'm the firm just now," declared the man, glowering at him as though he was a South Sea Islander with cannibalistic tendencies.

"Oh, you are, eh?" returned Brandon. "Well, I want to see Mr. Pepper."

"You do, eh?" The clerk eyed him with still greater disfavor. "You do, eh? Well, you can't see Mr. Pepper."

"Why not?"

"Well, for one reason he isn't here—he

ain't down yet—he's gone away—he's *dead*!"

He slammed down his pen and jumped off the high stool.

"Git out o' here you little rascal!" he roared, evidently expecting Brandon to be frightened by his vehemence. "We don't allow no loafing 'round this office. Git, I say, or——"

At that instant the street door behind the amused Brandon was opened, and with one glance at the new comer the clerk's jaws shut together like a trap, he turned about and bounded to his seat on the stool with great agility, and seizing his pen went to work on his books with monstrous energy.

Brandon turned about also, surprised at these proceedings, and found a short, pudgy looking little man standing in the doorway of the office, gazing at the clerk with a broad smile on his red face; but upon looking closer the boy discovered that, although the mouth was smiling, the gentleman's eyes were very stern indeed behind the gold rimmed eye glasses.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly conduct, Weeks?" he asked in a tone of displeasure.

"I—I was just showin' this—this young friend of mine how—how a feller up to the Bow'ry acted t'other night," murmured the clerk, a sort of ghastly red color mounting into his withered faced beneath the parchment-like skin.

"The Bowery?" repeated the gentleman, severely, and Brandon decided that this was no other than Mr. Adoniram Pepper himself.

"Yes, sir; Bowery Theater, you know," responded the clerk glibly, with an imploring side glance at Brandon. "'Twas in the play, 'The Buccaneer's Bride,' you know."

"No, I *don't* know," replied Mr. Pepper, in disgust. "So this is your friend, is it?" and he turned his gaze upon Brandon genially.

"Our friendship is of rather short duration," said Don, smiling.

"So I presume," returned Mr. Pepper. "Did you wish to see me?"

"Just a moment, sir."

"I'll give you two moments if you like." Then he turned again to the clerk and shook one fat finger at him. "One of these days I'll discharge you, Weeks," he said sternly.

"I expect so," groaned the clerk. "And then what'll I do?"

Mr. Pepper looked at him a moment silently.

"Then you'll go and lie somewhere else, I suppose. You *will* lie, Alfred Weeks, and I suppose I might as well keep you here and let you lie to me, as to turn you loose upon your fellow men. Well, well! Now, young man;" he turned with a sigh from the clerk and again looked at Brandon.

"I suppose you are Mr. Pepper?" began Brandon.

"I—sup—pose—I—am," replied the gentleman, with great care, scrutinizing the face of the captain's son with marked interest.

"Let's see, what is your name?" he said; "or, no, you needn't tell me. I know it already. Your name is Tarr, and you are Captain Horace Tarr's son!"

"Yes, sir, I am," Brandon replied in surprise.

"I knew it, I knew it!" declared Mr. Pepper, shaking both the boy's hands so violently that the eye glasses, which had a hard enough time generally in staying on the little man's nose, tumbled off, and were only caught and saved from destruction by great agility on Mr. Pepper's part.

"My dear boy! I'd have known you if I'd met you in Timbuctoo!" he declared. "Come into my office and tell me all about yourself. I've been thinking about you ever since—er—your poor father's death. I've got something to tell you, too."

He led Brandon toward the inner door, marked "Private," and opening it, disclosed a comfortably furnished room with a fire in the grate, and a general air of cheerfulness about it.

"Come right in," he repeated, and then shut the door behind his visitor.

But no sooner was the door closed than the acrobatic clerk was off his stool, and had his ear fitted to the keyhole with a celerity which denoted much practice in the art of eavesdropping.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH BRANDON FINDS MR. PEPPER TO BE AN EXCEEDINGLY PECULIAR INDIVIDUAL, AND VENTURES INTO RATHER DISREPUTABLE SOCIETY.

"My dear boy, sit down!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper, motioning Brandon to a chair. "Sit down and let me look at you."

He himself took a chair at a desk by the window and studied the boy intently for several moments. Meanwhile Brandon was making a mental examination of the shipping merchant as well.

Adoniram Pepper was a little, rotund man with a good deal of color in his face and very little hair on his head. His mouth was always smiling, but at times, as Brandon had already seen, the gray eyes could be very stern indeed behind the gold rimmed glasses, which latter had such hard work remaining upon Mr. Pepper's squat nose.

"Yes, sir, you are the perfect picture of your father," declared the shipping merchant at last. "I thought when I read of his death that we should never see his like again; but you have the promise of all his outward characteristics, at least. I hope you've his inner ones, too."

"I hope so," replied Brandon, pleased indeed at such praise of his father.

"He was a good man," continued Mr. Pepper ruminatively. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Brandon, sir."

"Oh yes, I remember now. Your father talked to me of you. He wanted you to follow the sea, too, and I suppose that is what you've come down here to New York for, eh?"

"Yes, I hope to go to sea," responded Brandon slowly.

Had he not remembered his experience with Caleb Wetherbee, without doubt Brandon would have opened his heart to the eccentric merchant and told him all; but bearing in mind the (to him) evident treachery of the mate of the Silver Swan, he was not ready to take into his confidence every friend of his father who happened to turn up.

"I thought so, I thought so!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper, rubbing his fat hands softly together. "The sea, by all means, my boy. That's where I've obtained my living—and something beside—for many years, though in a little different way from your father. Captain Tarr commanded one of my vessels before he purchased the Silver Swan."

"Yes, so he has told me," responded Brandon.

"It was a sad thing—his loss at sea," said Mr. Pepper.

He still smiled, but there was moisture on his eye glasses, and he removed and wiped them gently on a silk handkerchief.

"And he left you hardly a penny's worth?" he continued interrogatively.

"I have only about fifty dollars," Brandon replied briefly.

"Only fifty dollars," repeated the shipping merchant softly. "Not much—more than I had, though, when I went out to seek my fortune; but I had friends—powerful friends—and so have you, Brandon."

"Not many of them, I fancy," Don returned, smiling.

"Not many, perhaps; but *some*," the other declared with confidence, "and one of them is Adoniram Pepper."

"Thank you, Mr. Pepper," said Don. "I hope I shall be worthy of your kindness."

"No doubt of that—no doubt of that," rejoined the merchant, beaming upon him benignantly. "But to *talk* isn't enough for Adoniram Pepper; I want to *do* something for you, my boy."

"I—I don't know just what you can do for me, sir," said Brandon doubtfully.

"Don't know? Why, you want to go to sea, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; I think I do."

"Then I *can* help you," declared the merchant. "I've several vessels—three are in port at the present time—and it will be strange indeed if I can't find a berth on one of them for you."

"But I'm no sailor yet; I've got to learn," objected Don.

"So I suppose; but I'll risk your learning fast enough. Now, where would you like to go, and what position shall I give you?" and Mr. Pepper settled himself deeper into his chair, and looked as though he was prepared to offer Don any position he craved, from cook's assistant to captain.

Brandon felt just a little bewildered by all this, and probably showed his bewilderment on his face.

"I'll tell you what I have now," went on Mr. Pepper. "There's the brig Calypso, loading for Port Said—she sails tomorrow; and the clipper ship Frances Pepper (my sister's name, you know) *unloading* from Rio, and bound back there and to Argentine ports in a fortnight; and then there's the whaleback, Number Three."

"The whaleback?" queried Brandon in perplexity.

"Yes, sir, whaleback; a whaleback steamer, you know. Didn't you ever see one?"

Brandon shook his head.

"Well, you'll have a chance to," declared Mr. Pepper. "These whalebacks are something new. Lots o' folks don't believe in 'em; but I do. I bought the third one the company ever built, and it lies at one of my wharves now, being fitted up."

"But where will *that* go?" Brandon inquired with interest.

Mr. Pepper rubbed his bald pate reflectively.

"Well," he said, "that I don't know yet. I haven't decided. I've got a scheme, but whether 'twill work or not, I can't say. I must find a man to command her first. I don't suppose *you'd* feel like doing that, would you?" and the ship owner laughed jollily.

"I'm afraid not; perhaps, though, there'd be some other place on her I could fill with satisfaction to you."

"Perhaps so. If I put her in the passenger trade, how would you like to be purser—assistant purser, of course, till you learn the duties?"

"I think I should like it," replied Brandon, with some hesitation, however; "provided, of course, that I could take it at all."

"Eh? Not take it? Why not?" demanded Mr. Pepper.

"Well, first I want to see my father's old mate—one of the men saved from the raft, you know—about—well, about a matter concerning the wreck. Perhaps then, if you can give me a berth, I'll be able to accept it."

"Going over to the hospital to see him, eh? I know Caleb Wetherbee."

"No, he's out of the hospital now. He gave me his address—New England Hotel, on this very street—and hunting for the place is what brought me here."

"Bless my soul!" cried the ship owner; "Caleb out of hospital? Why, I didn't expect he'd be 'round for some time yet."

The papers said he was pretty nearly done for when he got to New York. It went harder with him than it did with the other sailor—a good deal harder."

Brandon looked at him curiously. If Caleb Wetherbee was a particular friend of Mr. Pepper, the captain's son began to feel some doubt as to the latter's sincerity.

"Perhaps you can tell me where the New England Hotel is?" he asked.

"Yes, it's right along here on this side of the street; several blocks away, perhaps. But," he added, "you don't tell me that Caleb is *there*? Why, he must be 'way down on his luck. I must see about this."

Mr. Pepper wrinkled his brow nervously and Brandon rose.

"Where are you going?"

"Up to see this man—this mate of the Silver Swan."

"Oh yes. Well, you tell him I'm coming up to see him myself, today. It's a mystery to me why he should go to *that* place. I don't understand it. How was he looking when you saw him—for I take it you *have* seen him?"

"How do you mean—sick or well?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he appeared in pretty fair health, I should say," replied Brandon, beginning to think that there was something queer about it all.

"Well, I'll see him myself," declared the merchant, rising and giving the boy his hand. "I tell you what we'll do, Brandon. If you don't get back here by noon, I'll step up and get you, and we'll go to lunch together; then afterward we'll take a look at the whaleback, if you like."

Brandon thanked him and opened the door into the outer office, almost falling over Mr. Alfred Weeks, who had his head suspiciously near the keyhole.

"Lo—looking for my ruler that I dropped," declared the red haired clerk, as his employer's eyes rested sternly upon him.

But as he passed out, Brandon noticed that the ruler was on the high desk holding open the leaves of a much tattered paper novel.

"Funny sort of fellow for a respectable ship owner to employ," Brandon decided, as he made his way along the crowded thoroughfare. "In fact, I guess I'll withhold my opinion of all three of these people till I know 'em better—Wetherbee, Pepper, and his clerk."

By closely scanning the signs on the buildings as he passed, the captain's son finally discovered the place he sought. He came within an ace of not doing so, however, for the words "New England Hotel" were simply 'painted on a small strip of tin on one side of the doorway, the rest of the sign space being devoted to the words:

JOHN BRADY,

WINES, LIQUORS, AND CIGARS.

Brandon hesitated a moment before en-

tering the place. It was plainly a saloon of the worst type, the "hotel" part evidently being but a "blind" by means of which the bar could be kept open all night.

Two or three disreputable men—sailors or longshoremen by appearance—were hanging about the door, but Brandon Tarr had a good deal of confidence in his ability to take care of himself, and finally ascended the steps.

A sickening odor of stale tobacco smoke and bad liquor assailed his nostrils as he stepped within the room, and he was almost tempted to back out and give up his intention of seeing Wetherbee. But the man behind the bar—a villainous looking fellow with a closely cropped head and red face—had seen him and came briskly forward.

"Well, young felley, what kin I do fur ye?" he asked, in what was intended as a pleasant tone.

Deciding that he was in for it, the captain's son walked forward to the bar and replied:

"Nothing to drink, thank you. I'm looking for a man who's stopping here—Caleb Wetherbee."

The bartender eyed him curiously and repeated:

"Caleb Wetherbee, eh? Well, I'll see 'f he's here."

He stepped back to a door leading into an inner room and, opening it a crack, called to somebody inside. There was a whispered conversation between the men, and the bull necked individual came back to the bar.

"All right, m' duck; he's in dere," he said, with a grin, and a motion of his thumb toward the inner door. "Yer don't have ter send in no kyard."

Taking this as a permission to enter, Brandon walked across the long saloon, littered with tables and chairs, and its floor covered with sawdust, and opened the door.

The apartment beyond was as badly furnished as the outer room there being only a square deal table and several wooden bottomed chairs. In one of these chairs before the table, with his head bowed upon his arms, was the sailor whom Brandon had seen two days before in the woods on his uncle's farm back in Chopmist, the only occupant of the place.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEREIN THE OLD SAILOR WITH THE WOODEN LEG BECOMES GREATLY EXCITED.

It was only in the country—in the woods and sheltered fence corners—that the patches of snow still remained on this sixth day of April. In New York the sun shone warmly upon the sidewalks, washed clean by the shower of the night before, and the tiny patches of grass in the parks and squares were quite green again.

About the middle of the forenoon a man stumped along a street leading to what remains of the Battery park—a man dressed in a half uniform of navy blue, and with a face (where the beard did not hide the cuticle) as brown as a berry.

At first glance one would have pronounced this person to be a sailor, and have been correct in the surmise, too.

The man's frame was of huge mold, with massive development of chest and limbs, and a head like a lion's. But his bronzed cheeks were somewhat hollow, and his step halting, this latter not altogether owing to the fact that his right leg had been amputated at the knee and the deficiency supplied by an old fashioned wooden leg.

Still, despite his evident infirmity, the old seaman looked cheerfully out upon the world on this bright April morning, and pegged along the sidewalk and into the park with smiling good nature.

Not a beggar had accosted him during his walk down town without having a nickel tossed to him, and it was with vast contentment that the wooden legged sailor at length seated himself upon a bench, from which vantage point he could overlook the bay and its multitudinous shipping.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, sniffing the air which blew in from the sea, like a hungry dog. "This is *life*, this is! Thank heaven I've got away from them swabs of doctors at last. Another week at that 'ere hospital would ha' been the death o' me. Still, I reckon they meant well 'nough."

He sat there for some time in cheerful silence, and drank in the exhilarating air, his pea cloth jacket thrown open to the breeze, baring the broad expanse of flannel shirt beneath.

"A few days o' this'll put me right on my feet," he said, with delight, "better'n all the tonics the old sawbones ever invented. Lord! if I'd had this breeze a-blowin' inter my winder up there to the hospital, I'd been out a fortnight ago."

"The old man ain't dead yet. It was a pretty hard tug, I admit; but here I be!"

He slapped his leg with such vigor that a flock of sparrows flew up with sudden affright from the path; but his energetic gesture was taken in another sense by the group of urchins which had gathered near by to talk and fight (much after the manner of their feathered prototypes, by the way) over the morning's sale of papers.

At the old man's motion half a dozen of these sharp eyed little rascals broke away from the group, and ran shrieking toward him, wildly waving their few remaining wares in his face.

"'Ere you are, sir! *Tribune, Sun, World!*"

"*Tribune*," said the old sailor, laughing heartily as though he saw something extremely ludicrous in their mistake.

"My last 'un, sir. Thankee!"

The successful Arab pocketed his money and went back to his friends, while the sailor slowly unfolded the sheet and took up the thread of his reflections again.

"Once I get my sea legs on," he thought, fumbling in his pocket for a pair of huge, steel bowed spectacles, which he carefully wiped and placed astride his nose—"once I get my sea legs on, I'll take a trip up ter Rhode Island and see the cap'n's boy, unless he turns up in answer to my letter.

"Poor lad! he's doubtless heart broken by Cap'n Horace's death, and won't feel much like goin' into this 'ere treasure hunt-in' business; but for his own good I'll have ter rouse him up. It would be what the cap'n would wish, I know."

He let the paper lie idly on his knee a moment, and a mist rose in his eyes.

"Never mind if the old brig *has* gone to pieces before we get there," he muttered. "I've got a little shot in the locker yet, an' the boy sha'n't come ter want. I'll do my duty by him as though he was my own son, that I will!"

He picked up the paper again, and turned naturally to the shipping news, which he ran over carelessly, smiling the while. Finally his eye was attracted by something near the bottom of the column.

"Eh, what's this?" he exclaimed. "What's this about the Silver Swan?"

With great excitement he read the following news item, following each line of the text with his stumpy forefinger:

Captain Millington, of the English steamer *Manitoba*, which arrived here yesterday from Brazil, reports that he passed a very dangerous wreck in latitude 22:03, longitude 70:32. It was the hull of a brig, apparently in good condition, but with her masts snapped off close to the decks, and all her rigging carried away. The name on her stern was Silver Swan, Boston.

This is the same derelict reported by the steamer *Montevideo* at Savannah several weeks ago. According to Captain Millington, the wreck of the brig is a great menace to all vessels plying between this and South American ports, as its course seems to be right across the great highway followed by most of the steamship lines.

It will be remembered that the Silver Swan was wrecked over two months ago on Reef Eight, southwest of Cuba, grounding, according to the report of the survivors of her crew, upright on the rock. The captain of the *Montevideo* sighted her not far from the reef, from which she was doubtless loosened by the westerly gale of February 13th; but since that time she has floated some distance to the north and east, and if she follows the same tactics as many of her sister derelicts, she may zigzag across the course of the South American steamers for months.

The cruisers *Kearsarge* and *Vesuvius* are both lying in port at present, and it will be respectfully suggested to the Navy Department that one or both of those vessels be sent to destroy this and several others of the most dangerous derelicts now floating off our coast.

"Shiver my timbers, sir!"

With this forcible and exceedingly salty ejaculation, the old sailor with the wooden leg dropped the newspaper to the walk, and his spectacles along with it, and springing up, trampled upon them both.

But in his great excitement he noticed neither the torn paper nor the ruined glasses. He stumped up and down the walk for several moments before he became calm enough to think coherently.

In fact, the blue coated policeman on the corner had begun to eye him suspiciously.

"The Silver Swan afloat—a derelict!" he muttered. "This 'ere is a sitiuation I didn't look for. An' then, them blasted cruisers are liable to go down there and blow her into kingdom come any minute. The Silver Swan on Reef Eight was bad enough, but the Silver Swan afloat, at the mercy of the gales as well as other vessels, is worse!"

"Now, what in creation'll I do about it? I haven't heard from the boy yet, and there's little enough time as it is. Why, she might sink 'most any time with all them di'monds the cap'n told about aboard her!"

"I'll take a steamer to get down there ahead of them confounded iron pots" (by this disrespectful term did he designate Uncle Sam's cruisers), "but who under the canopy's got a steamer to charter?"

"By the great horn spoon, I have it!" he exclaimed, after a moment's thought. "Adoniram Pepper is just the fellow."

With this declaration he jammed his hat on his head, and stumped off as rapidly as one good leg and one wooden one could carry him, toward the shipping merchant's office on Water Street.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHOWING HOW THE OLD SAILOR'S EXCITEMENT IS SHARED BY MR. ADONIRAM PEPPER AND—MR. WEEKS.

As the old sailor hurried along the street toward the ship owner's office he became calmer, and, being a person who had all his life been taking greater or less chances in his business of seagoing, he began to look at the situation more composedly.

The Silver Swan was without doubt in far greater danger of destruction now than she had been while hard and fast on the reef, but no amount of worrying would better the matter, and therefore one might accept the fact coolly. Then, besides, she had floated unmolested for over six weeks already, and there was a big chance for her doing so for six weeks or more to come.

"Blast these navy vessels any way, I say!" the old man muttered, stumping along now at a moderate gait. "They probably won't be able to find her. And if nothing collides with her, I reckon she'll keep afloat for one while, for I can swear

myself that the old brig warn't injured none below the water line—she went on that reef jist as easy!

"She's got the same chance o' staying above board—the Silver Swan has—as any other craft that's become a derelict. Look at the schooner W. L. White, abandoned by her crew during the great storm of '88. She floated about the North Atlantic for the better part of a year, before she went ashore at last on the Hebrides.

"An' then there was the Wyer G. Sargent, mahogany laden, floated fifty five hundred mile, or more, 'cording to the pilot chart, a-swingin' 'round the Atlantic from New Foundland to the Azores for two years. An' there may be many another good ship that's got a bigger record 'n that at this very day, down in the Sargasso sea. Oh, it might be worse."

Nevertheless, despite this cheerful view, the old sailor's forehead was knotted into a scowl as he opened the door of the ship owner's dingy office and entered. The red haired clerk was alone at the desk and the door of the private office was shut.

"Well, you jail bird, are you here yet?" demanded the visitor impolitely, eying the clerk with exceeding disfavor.

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Featherbee—"

"Wetherbee, you scoundrel!" roared the sailor, in a voice like a bull.

"Oh, yes! I should say Wetherbee—er—that's what I meant," the clerk hastened to say.

It was remarkable to notice the difference between the greeting accorded Caleb Wetherbee and that given young Brandon Tarr shortly before.

"So you haven't managed to get at Pepperpod's till and clear out, yet, eh?" demanded Caleb jocularly.

Mr. Weeks scowled and grinned at the same time, a feat that few men can perform; but he made no verbal reply to the question.

"Where is he?" queried the sailor, nodding toward the inner office. "In his den?"

"He's busy—engaged," Mr. Weeks hastened to say.

"I believe you're lying to me, Weeks," returned the sailor, after eying the fellow a moment. "You'd rather lie than eat. Where's Pepperpod?"

"He—he really *is* engaged, sir," declared Weeks, who stood in mortal fear of the brawny sailor. "That is, he told me to say so to anybody that called—"

"I don't doubt it—that's what's taught you to lie," cried Caleb, in disgust. "Well, I'm going to see him if he's engaged fifty times. Cut along now and tell him I'm here."

Mr. Weeks slowly descended from his stool, evidently unwilling to comply with the request.

"Get a move on you," the sailor commanded. "If you don't I'll roast you over a slow fire. I'm just out of the hospital

and I've got an appetite like an ostrich—or I'd never think of eating *you*."

Mr. Weeks unwillingly went to the inner door and rapped on the panel. Then he turned the knob and went in, remaining a few moments, and on making his appearance again, held the portal open for Caleb.

The sailor entered without a word and the clerk closed the door behind him; then, as on the former occasion, he applied his ear to the keyhole with a diligence worthy of a better cause.

Mr. Pepper was sitting before his desk, which was piled high with papers and letters. The day's mail had just been sent up from the wareroom office by Mr. Marks, the ship owner's trusted manager, or "steward," as Adoniram was in the habit of calling him.

Beginning business life more than fifty years before in this very office, Mr. Pepper could not bring himself, as his trade increased, to leave his old quarters, and having found his manager to be a most trustworthy man, he had shifted the burden of the more arduous duties upon his younger shoulders, and himself reposed contentedly amid the dust, the gloom, and the cobwebs of the Water Street office.

Thus it was that few people ever saw "Adoniram Pepper & Co." to know him; but to his old friends, those of his boyhood and young manhood, Adoniram was always the same.

Naturally his acquaintance was mostly among seafaring people, and it was no uncommon sight to see old hulks of sea captains and ship owners, long past their usefulness, steering a course for the Water Street office on pleasant days, where they were sure to receive a pleasant word from the little old gentleman, if he was in, and not uncommonly a bit of silver to spend for luxuries which "sailors' homes" do not supply.

The old gentleman sprang up at once at Caleb's appearance, the unfortunate eye glasses jumping off the chubby little nose as though they were endowed with life. Mr. Pepper gave both his hands to the huge sailor, who indeed looked gigantic beside the little man, and begged him to sit down.

"Well, Pepperpod, how are ye?" cried the sailor, in a hearty roar that shook the light pieces of furniture in the room, just as his bulk shook the chair he had seated himself in.

"First rate, old Timbertoes!" declared the old gentleman, laughing merrily. "So you're out of the hospital, at last?"

"I be, Adoniram, I be!" cried Caleb with satisfaction. "Never was so glad o' anythin' in my life. Them sawbones would have killed me if they'd kep' me there much longer."

"Well, well, Caleb, you was a mighty sick man—a mighty sick man."

"I reckon I was," responded the sailor reflectively.

"The doctor wouldn't let me come in to see you," said the merchant, smiling jovially; "so I had to content myself with sending up things."

"Yes, you did," said Caleb, turning on him sternly. "I *did* think, Adoniram, that you wouldn't waste your money on such truck as that—a sendin' me white grapes, an' jellies, an' bunches o' posies."

He snorted in veriest scorn.

"Well, er—er—you see, Caleb, I told Frances about you and she took over the things herself," said Adoniram hesitatingly.

"Hem!"

The old sea dog flushed up like a girl and mopped his suddenly heated face with a great bandana, finally saying gruffly:

"You tell your sister, Miss Frances, that I'm mightily obliged for 'em, Adoniram. They—er—jest went to the right spot, you tell her; jest what I needed to tone me up!"

"You'd better come up and tell her yourself, Caleb," said the merchant, with a sly smile.

"Well—er—mebbe I will. Thankee, Adoniram."

He was silent a moment, and then, suddenly bethinking himself of the errand which had brought him there, he turned upon the little merchant with a slap of his knee which sounded throughout the office like a gun shot.

"But this 'ere ain't what brought me here—not by a long chalk. Ye know the Silver Swan, Adoniram? Cap'n Horace Tarr's brig 't I was with when she grounded on Reef Eight, two months and more ago?"

Mr. Pepper nodded.

"Well, sir, she's afloat."

"Afloat!"

"That's what I said; afloat! A-f-l-o-t-e," responded the sailor, spelling the word very carefully, if a trifle erratically.

"How—how can that be?"

"Well, ye see she went aground jest like she was goin' inter stocks for repairs, and if we'd stuck by her, it's my opinion Cap'n Tarr'd ha' been alive now." He stopped and blew his nose hastily. "Well, what is, can't be bettered, so we'll say no more o' that."

"But what I'm gettin' at is this: she went aground all standin', an' the storm wot come up right arterwards, blew her off ag'in. She's been floating, according to this morning's paper, ever since."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Adoniram. "It's too bad her hull can't be secured for the boy. If it's still sound——"

"Sound as a dollar!"

"Where is it floating?"

"Cordin' to the report of a cap'n wot sighted her, she's somewheres about latitude 22, longitude 70."

"A pretty valuable derelict, eh, Caleb?" said the merchant, reflectively.

"Valuable? Well, I should say!" The old sailor looked at his friend curiously a

moment, and then leaned forward and rested his huge hand on Adoniram's knee. "Besides a valible cargo wot we took on at the Cape and Rio, *there's enough diamonds hid aboard that brig to make the boy a second Vanderbilt!*"

"Mercy me!" exclaimed the merchant, and this time the eye glasses leaped off their insecure resting place and fell with a crash to the floor, the splintered crystal flying in all directions.

"Now you've done it, Adoniram!" ejaculated Caleb in disgust. "What under the canopy a man like you—with no nose to speak of—wants to try to wear such tackle as them for, is beyond me."

"Well—er—Frances thinks they look better on me than other kinds of glasses," remarked the merchant meekly.

"Well—hem!—I s'pose they *do* look some better on ye," declared Caleb loyally, and then a slight noise from the other side of the door caused him to jump up and spring hastily to it.

When he flung the door open, however, the red haired clerk was astride his high stool with a look of perfect innocence on his face; but Caleb was not reassured. He shook his huge fist at the fellow, and then shut the door again, turning the key in the lock and hanging his hat upon the door knob for further precaution.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH CALEB EXPLAINS HIMSELF AND RECEIVES IN RETURN A STARTLING COMMUNICATION.

"Some of these days," said Caleb, with decision, when he had taken these precautions, "I shall wring that scoundrel's neck, Adoniram. I wonder at your keeping him here."

"Well, you see, nobody else would have him," responded the merchant, as though that fact was reason enough for *his* keeping the objectional Mr. Weeks.

"Ya-as—one o' your blasted philanthropic notions," declared Caleb, with a snort denoting disgust. "Well, he'll rob and murder you some day and then you'll wish you'd heard to me. If 'jail bird' ain't written on *his* face, then I never saw it on no man's."

"But, Caleb, what do you mean by the astounding remark you just made about the Silver Swan?" asked the merchant, drawing the sailor's mind away from the subject of Mr. Alfred Weeks and his frailties.

"I'll tell you about it," said Caleb, in a lower tone, seating himself by the desk again. "What I said is straight, Pepper. There is hidden inside that hulk of the Silver Swan, a lot o' di'monds—how many, I don't know—but enough, according to Cap'n Horace's own words to make a man fabulously rich. They belong to his boy, Brandon, and *we* must get 'em for him."

"I never knew a word about the stones

till we was on the raft. Cap'n Horace was pretty fur gone—any one with half an eye could see *that*—and when we'd been out several days an' hadn't sighted no ship, he wrote a long letter to Brandon an' give it to me with a package of other papers.

"I've got them papers right here at this identical minute: but I ain't opened 'em, 'cause it ain't my place to do so. They tells all about the di'monds an' how they come into Cap'n Horace's han's.

"It seems that just afore we left the Cape a man come aboard the Silver Swan and brought a package of wot *he* thought was papers, to Cap'n Horace, from his brother Anson."

"Why, Anson was dead long ago, I thought," interrupted Mr. Pepper.

"So did everybody else think so; but he wasn't. He was dead, though, when this feller seed Cap'n Horace, for he'd give the package into the man's hands when he was dying, for *him* to send to Cap'n Tarr. But we put into the Cape afore the man got 'round to sendin' 'em to the States.

"*He* never knew what a valuable thing he was a carryin' 'round; but when the cap'n come to open the package he found a lot o' di'monds done up in a separate wrapper. These he hid somewhere about the brig—he tells about it in this letter to Brandon, I b'lieve.

"I wanted to know why he didn't take 'em on the raft w'en we left the brig, but it seems he misdoubted himself about a rascally sailor we had with us—one Jim Leroyd.

"This 'ere Leroyd had been snoopin' around the cabin when the cap'n was given the di'monds, and he thought the feller suspected something. So, not knowing how it might go with any of us, he left the gems on the brig, preferring to risk 'losin' 'em altogether, rather than to cause strife an' p'r'aps bloodshed on that raft.

"An' I reckon 'twas lucky he did so, fur we had trouble enough with that swab Leroyd."

"Why, wasn't he the man who was saved with you?" asked the merchant.

"That's who."

"Tell me, Caleb," said Mr. Pepper earnestly, "why was it he stood the experience so much better than you? Why, he was discharged from the hospital in a week, so I understand, while you show traces of the suffering you underwent even now."

Caleb closed his lips grimly and looked at the little man in silence for several moments. Then he leaned further forward and clutched his arm with one great brown hand.

"He had food that I didn't have," he whispered hoarsely.

"What!" cried Adoniram, shrinking back, his eyes abulge.

Caleb nodded slowly.

"There were four of us on that raft. Paulo Montez—he went first. We divided

the food and water, an' that villain Leroyd ate his all up. Then we had ter drive him behind his chest at the other end of the raft, an' keep him there at the point of our pistols.

"Then the cap'n went, an'—an'—*I had to throw him to the sharks to keep him out o' the clutches o' that cannibal, Leroyd!*"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the ship owner, shrinking back into his chair, his face the picture of horrified amazement.

"Yes, sir," whispered Caleb; "he dragged poor Paulo's body back o' that chest—an'—well, 'taint no use talkin'! I ain't said a word about it before to any living creature. It's only my word ag'in his, at best. But I swear, Adoniram, I'd kill the hound with as little compunction as I would a rat.

"He's been sneaking 'round the hospital, inquiring about me, too," continued the sailor. "He's got his eye on these papers, for he see Cap'n Horace give 'em to me. I reckon he don't know what they're about, but he suspects there's money in it. He was 'round to the hospital only last night, so the doctor told me.

"And now, Adoniram, wot I want o' you is to help me find this derelict before some o' Uncle Sam's blasted iron pots go out after her. We must get the boy down from that uncle's place in Rhode Island —"

"Why, didn't you see him this mornin'?" asked Mr. Pepper, in surprise.

"See who?"

"Why, the boy—Captain Tarr's son, Brandon?"

"What?" roared the sailor. "Then he's here in New York, is he?"

"Why—of—course," responded the merchant, in bewilderment. "I thought you'd seen him again. He started out to call on you not two hours ago. He said you'd given him your address—at the New England Hotel, just below here.

"And what I want to say, Caleb, is that I don't consider it a great proof of friendship on *your* part, for you to go to such a place as that, even if you were low in finances. I'd only be too glad to have you come to my house and stay the rest of your natural life—and so would Frances."

"Me!—at the New England Hotel!—why the man's crazy!" declared Caleb.

"Ain't you stopping there?" gasped the merchant.

"Am I? Well, I guess not! I ain't but just got out o' the hospital this blessed mornin'."

"Why, he said he'd seen you once, and you'd told him to call at the New England Hotel."

"Who?" roared Caleb.

"Brandon Tarr."

"Why, man alive, I never saw the lad in all my life!"

"Then," declared Adoniram, with energy, "there's foul play about it. When

I came down this morning I found the captain's son waiting to see me. He'd just come down from Rhode Island, I believe, and he'd got your address—said he'd already seen you once, mind you—and was going up to this place to see you again.

"I thought 'twas funny you should put up at such a house, Caleb; but I didn't know but perhaps you were 'on your uppers'" (Caleb snorted at this), "and had gone there for cheapness. I told Brandon I'd come up after him this noon and take him to lunch."

But Caleb was on his feet now, and pacing the floor like a caged lion.

"I see it all—I see it all!" he declared. "It's some o' that swab Leroyd's work. Why, man alive, do you know what the New England Hotel is? It's one o' the wickedest places in New York. I know the den well, and the feller as runs it, too. Why, the boy's in danger every moment he stays there!"

He seized his hat and jammed it on his head again.

"Ef anything's happened to that boy, I'll break every bone in that scoundrel's body!" he exclaimed, seizing the door and throwing it wide open without the formality of unlocking it.

The splintered wood and broken lock flew in all directions as he dashed through the doorway and flung himself into the street, while Mr. Pepper remained weakly in his chair, too utterly bewildered to move, and the festive Mr. Weeks dodged behind the high desk with alacrity, as the sailor went through the outer office like a whirlwind.

CHAPTER XVI.

TELLING HOW BRANDON BEARDED THE LION
IN HIS LAIR. IT ENDS WITH AN
EXCITING STRUGGLE.

As Brandon Tarr entered the apartment behind the bar room of the New England Hotel, the man at the table raised his head and surveyed him surlily. Evidently he had been drinking, and the liquor had changed his mood greatly from that of the affable sailor who had accosted the captain's son in the Chopmist woods.

"Well, how came *you* here?" inquired the sailor, in no very friendly tone, gazing at Brandon, with bloodshot eyes.

"I came down on the train."

"Ain't you lost?"

"Guess not," responded the boy.

The man shifted his position uneasily, keeping his eyes fixed upon his visitor.

"Can't say as I expected to see you—just yet, any way."

"No?" returned Brandon coolly.

"Say! wot the blazes do you want, any way?" demanded the sailor fiercely, after an instant's silence. "It won't pay you to be sassy here, my lad, now I can assure ye."

"Think so? Seems to me you're not as glad to see me as I reckoned you would be. It didn't exactly pay you to come 'way up to Rhode Island to pump me, did it?"

The fellow hissed out an oath between his teeth and clinched his fist angrily,

"You're too fresh, you are!" he declared.

"Maybe."

"So I went up there to pump you, eh?"

"I reckon."

"And what did *you* come down here for?"

"To pump you," responded the captain's son, laughing.

The sailor stared at him in utter amazement for a moment.

"Of all the swabs——" he began, but Brandon interrupted him.

"See here, Wetherbee, I've come here for a purpose. My father intrusted you with some papers for me (though why he ever did so I don't see—I mistrusted your ugly face the first time I ever saw it), and now you are trying to play me false."

"You know too much!" roared the sailor, rising and thumping the table with his clenched fist.

"Yes, I *do* know too much for your good—or for the success of your plot," Brandon replied, with cool sarcasm. "See this?"

He took the bit of newspaper from his pocket and tossed it upon the table before the man.

"What is it?" demanded the sailor, clutching at the clipping.

"The newspaper item stating that the Silver Swan is a derelict, instead of being sunken, as you declared to me. Had I not found it in the woods after you left, I might have still believed your lying yarn, Wetherbee."

The sailor crumpled the bit of paper in his fist and shook the clenched member in the boy's face.

"Young man," he said with emphasis, "ye think ye're smart; but do ye know that ye're likely ter git inter trouble fore ye get out o' this place? I don't 'low no swab of a boy ter sass me."

"I'm sorry for that," said Brandon, thinking the fellow's threat but mere bombastic eloquence; "for I reckon you'll have to stand it."

His very fearlessness caused the man to hesitate ere he used violence, for it *might* be that the boy had friends within call. The sailor therefore bit his thick lip in fury, and poured a shower of vituperations upon his visitor's head.

"Let me tell you something else, also," continued Brandon. "I propose to have those papers that father gave you."

"Oh, you do?" half screamed the man, stamping up and down the room in ungovernable rage.

"Yes, sir; and no amount of swearing will scare me. Those papers are mine and if you won't give them up peaceably, the law will make you."

Suddenly the man stopped storming and became more tranquil.

"So you're goin' ter law erbout it, be ye?"

"No, I don't think I'll have to; I think you'll see plain enough that it will be best for you to give them up. By your own confession you don't know where the treasure is hid; *but I do*. Somehow I'm going to find the wreck of the brig and get—whatever it was father hid. But first, I want those papers that I may know *what* the—treasure consists of."

"Oh, ye do? Well, how be ye goin' ter prove that I've got the documents?"

"Very easily indeed," Brandon responded frankly. "I'm going to look up the sailor who was with you on the raft. If father gave you the papers *he* doubtless knows it, and I don't believe that there are *two* men as dishonest as you, Wetherbee."

"So you know where the old man has hid the stuff, hey? An' yer goin' ter see th'—th' other sailor an' git his evidence, be ye?"

The man's ugly face turned a deep reddish hue and he reached out his hands and clutched the empty chair as though he were strangling somebody. The gesture was so terribly realistic and the man's face so diabolical, that Brandon involuntarily shrank back.

"You little fool!" hissed the other slowly. "You've put yourself right inter my han's an' let me tell ye I'm a bad man ter monkey with. I've let ye hev it all your own way so fur, but now 'twill be *my* turn, an' don't you forgit it! Ye know where that treasure is hidden aboard the brig, hey? Then, by the great jib boom, ye'll tell me or *ye'll never git out o' here alive!*"

As he uttered the threat he sprang upon the boy so suddenly that Brandon was totally unprepared for the assault. His victim was no match for his great strength, and was borne to the floor at once.

The villain's hand upon his throat deprived the boy of all power of utterance, and he felt himself being slowly choked into insensibility.

Suddenly the door between the apartment and the bar room was flung wide open as though a small hurricane had descended upon the establishment of the New England Hotel. Don's villainous assailant—big and burly though he was—was seized in a grip of iron, pulled from his victim, and thrown bodily to the other side of the room.

"You scoundrel!" roared Caleb (for it was he) in a voice that made the chandelier tremble. "Would you kill the lad?"

But Brandon, now that the pressure was removed from his throat, was on his feet in a moment, staring curiously at the big, wooden legged sailor.

"Just saved you from adding murder to your other sins, did I?" continued the mate of the Silver Swan. "Did he hurt you, lad?"

"Guess I'm all right," responded Brandon, feeling of his throat as his assailant arose to his feet, scowling ferociously at the new comer.

"I'll live to see you hung yet, Jim Leroyd!" Caleb declared, shaking his huge fist at the sailor.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Brandon; "is *that* his name? Why, he told me he was Caleb Wetherbee!"

"He did, eh? Blast his impudence! Let me tell you, lad, if Cale Wetherbee looked like that scoundrel, he'd go drown himself for very shame. *I'm* Caleb Wetherbee, myself, and *you*, I reckon, are Brandon Tarr."

Brandon was fairly stupefied by this announcement.

"But what about the—the papers father put into his hands for me?" he asked, breathlessly.

"Your father give *him* papers, lad? Well, I reckon not! He's lied to ye."

"Then he hasn't them?"

"Not he. I've got 'em myself, safe and sound."

"You have them?" repeated Brandon.

"That I have," replied the mate confidently, "and what's more, I've got 'em right here!"

At this juncture the door behind them opened and the red faced barkeeper came into the room.

"Look er-here, wot's de meanin' of all dis, hey?" he demanded, eying Caleb with disfavor.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the wooden legged sailor, in disgust. "I know *you*, Jack Brady. Get out here, you walking beer keg! I'm having a private seance with this gentleman," intimating the cowed Leroyd.

A quick look of intelligence passed between Leroyd and the bartender.

"Ye're tryin' ter kick up a shindy in dis place, dat's wot ye're at!" declared the latter, rolling up his sleeves, belligerently.

"Yes, and I'll kick up a bigger row before I'm through," Caleb replied threateningly. "Now you run out and play, sonny, while I talk to my friend, Mr. Leroyd, here."

This so angered the pugilistic looking man that he made a dash at the big sailor; but the consequences were exceedingly unpleasant.

Caleb's hammer-like fist swung round with the force of a pile driver, and an ox would have fallen before that blow. As Mr. Brady himself would have put it, he was "knocked out in one round."

But the treacherous Leroyd, taking advantage of his friend's attack on the mate, sprang upon Caleb from the other side. This flank movement was totally unexpected, and, weakened by his long confinement in the hospital, the mate of the Silver Swan could not hold his own with his former shipmate.

Both went to the floor with a crash, and as they fell Leroyd tore open his antagonist's coat and seized a flat leather case from the mate's inside pocket. Dealing one heavy blow on the other's upturned face, the scoundrel sprang up and disappeared like a shot through the door at the opposite end of the apartment.

"Stop him!" roared Caleb, and Brandon, who had stood utterly bewildered and helpless throughout the scene, sprang forward to the door.

"The papers! He's stolen the papers!" he gasped, seizing the knob and trying to pull open the door.

But the key had been turned in the lock and the stout door baffled all his attempts upon it.

CHAPTER XVII.

RELATING A TIMELY ARRIVAL, IT SHOWS LIKEWISE HOW THE OMNIPRESENT WEEKS PROVES HIS RIGHT TO THE TERM.

HAMPERED as he was by his wooden leg, it was several moments before the old sailor could get upon his feet, and the festive Mr. Brady, maddened and almost blinded by the blow he had received in the first of the fracas, would have pitched in to him had not Brandon threatened the fellow with one of the heavy chairs with which the room was furnished.

"I'll make dis the sorriest day er your life, ye bloomin' big brute!" declared Mr. Brady, holding one hand to his bruised face, and shaking the other fist at the sailor. "I'll have ye jugged—that's wot I'll do——"

And just then he stopped, for in the doorway leading to the bar room stood Adoniram Pepper, flushed and breathless, and behind him the burly forms of two blue-coated policemen.

"Thank goodness, the boy is safe!" gasped the little merchant. "Are *you* hurt, Caleb?"

"Some shaken up, but that's all, shipmate," declared the mate of the Silver Swan. "I got here just in time to keep that brute Leroyd from choking the lad to death."

"Mercy! and where is he now?"

"Skipped, I reckon," responded Caleb briefly, brushing the sawdust off his clothing.

"But he's stolen the papers," said Brandon.

"Not the papers your father gave Caleb?" cried the little man. "He must be captured at once!"

"Yes, he robbed me," said Caleb slowly; "but whether he got anything o' much value or not is another question. Let's get out o' here 'Doniram, and take account o' cargo."

Just here the policemen crowded into the room.

"Has your man got away, sir?" one of them asked Mr. Pepper.

"I'm afraid he has, officer—unless you want this fellow arrested, Caleb?" indicating the saloon keeper.

At this Brady began to storm and rave disgracefully.

"Come, quit that, Brady!" commanded officer Mullen. "You're deep in this, I've no doubt. You want to walk a chalk line now, or I'll have your license taken away. D'ye understand?"

Mr. Brady subsided at this threat, and the party filed out.

"It's all right now, officer," said Adoniram, slipping something into Mr. Mullen's hand. "We won't trouble you further. If anything more comes of it, I'll step around and see the captain myself."

The two policemen nodded and Mr. Pepper led his friends back to his office.

On the way Brandon explained his previous connection with the villain Leroyd, and recounted what had occurred at the New England Hotel before Caleb's timely appearance.

"Well, I reckon you were just what Leroyd told you—a little too fresh," was the comment of the mate of the Silver Swan. "'Twas only by luck that ye warn't garroted by that scoundrel. There's been more than one man gone into that dive that never come out arterwards, now I tell ye."

"You are wrong, Caleb," declared Mr. Pepper confidently. "It was not luck—'twas Providence."

"Mebbe you're right, old man," returned the mate. "Now, lad, come in here and tell us all about yourself before we do anything further. We want to get a thorough understanding o' the case."

They had arrived at the shipping merchant's office, but it was locked and Mr. Pepper had to use his own private pass key.

"Weeks has gone out," the old gentleman explained, ushering them in. "It's his dinner hour."

"I'm glad the swab's out of the way," growled the sailor. "I don't see what you keep that prying, sneaking rascal about here for any way. He'll do you some damage some time, 'Doniram."

"I—I should dislike to discharge him," said the old gentleman gently. "He—he is an unfortunate fellow——"

"Unfortunate!" snorted the mate in disgust.

"Yes, unfortunate, Caleb. Even his face is against him. Who would want such a looking fellow around an office? And office work is all he knows how to do. Marks wouldn't keep him down to the other office, so I *had* to take him up here."

"Had to!"

Caleb stared at his old friend in pitying surprise.

"'Doniram," he said, "you—make—me—weary!"

Then he shook his head sadly and

dropped heavily into a chair he had formerly occupied near the merchant's desk.

"Come," he said, turning to Brandon, holding out his hand affectionately, "come and sit down here beside me, my lad. We want to know each other better—you and I—and I've got a good deal to say to ye.

"Your father's last words to me was 'Remember, Cale!' an' they referred to the fac' that he'd left me in charge o' you—an' of your property. An' I'm rememberin', though that hospital business delayed me a good bit."

"But, Caleb," said the merchant nervously, "what will you do about those—those diamonds," and he looked at Brandon smilingly, "now that that scamp has stolen the captain's papers?"

"Diamonds?" echoed Brandon.

"Aye, diamonds—lashin's of 'em!" the sailor declared earnestly. "If yer father was ter be believed—an' *you* know whether or not to believe him as well as I—there's di'monds hid aboard that brig, enough to make you a rich man, my lad."

"But the papers?" repeated Mr. Pepper.

"Blast the papers!" exclaimed the sailor, slapping his thigh impatiently. "They don't amount to a row of pins."

"But they'll tell that Leroyd all about the treasure and just where to find it," said Brandon.

"And you won't know *where* to look for it aboard the Silver Swan," Mr. Pepper chimed in.

"I won't hey?" responded Caleb with a snort of disgust. "Sure of that, be ye?"

"I think I know where father would place the gems for safe keeping," said Brandon, slowly.

"Yes, an I reckon I know, too," the mate declared. "There's a sliding panel in the cabin—eh, lad?"

Brandon nodded acquiescence.

"Yes, that's it," went on the sailor; "it come to me just now when I was a-thinkin' of the matter. We useter keep our private papers in that 'ere hole in the bulkhead. It's the third panel on the port side from the companionway."

"Sh!" exclaimed the merchant, "suppose somebody should overhear you."

"Oh, that sneak Weeks isn't here," replied Caleb carelessly. "You don't have anybody else working for you here who would snoop like him, do you, 'Doniram'?"

The merchant shook his head with a mild smile.

"Well, then," said the mate of the Silver Swan, "we can get down to business. We

understand each other, eh, lad? Ye'll put yourself under our care, an' 'Doniram an' I'll see you through this thing."

"I'm only too glad to have your help," cried Don warnily. "Alone I can do nothing; but with you to help me, Mr. Wetherbee—"

"Drop that!" thundered Caleb. "Don't you 'mister' me, blast yer impudence! I'm Cale Wetherbee to *you*, as I was to yer father."

Then he added more mildly:

"You can count on me, Don. And you can count on Pepperpod, here, every time, eh?" and he nodded to the ship owner.

"That you can, Don," rejoined Mr. Pepper. "And already I have a vessel I can place at your disposal. It is the whaleback steamer I spoke of this morning. You shall have her and go in quest of the Silver Swan."

"A whaleback, hey?" repeated Caleb quickly, with a doubtful shake of his head. "I don't know much about them new fangled things."

"Well, you shall before long," Mr. Pepper declared. "With her you can beat any of these cruisers to the brig, and get the diamonds before they blow her sky high."

"Now, let us go out to lunch; it is long past my regular hour," he continued. "I will close the office for the day and you must both go home with me. Wait; I'll telephone to Marks."

"Let me git my clo'es brushed before we go up town, 'Doniram,'" exclaimed Caleb, in sudden haste. "I've got sawdust all over me."

"All right," the merchant responded, giving the call for the wareroom office (it was a private line); "you'll find a whisk broom in that wardrobe there. Don can brush you."

The sailor arose and walked over to the wardrobe.

"Dern the thing! how it sticks," he remarked impatiently, tugging at the handle.

Then he exerted his great strength and the door flew open with surprising suddenness, and with it, to the startled amazement of the entire party, came the red haired clerk, Alfred Weeks, clinging vainly to the inner knob.

The momentum of his exit fairly threw him across the small room, where he dropped into a chair which happened to stand handy, gazing, the picture of fright, at the infuriated sailor.

(To be continued.)



SAVED BY THE UNION JACK.

By Robert T. Hardy, Jr.



"It seems to me," Harry said, looking up from his book of adventures as his uncle entered the room—"it seems to me, Uncle Frank, that it must be a terrible sensation to have to face a file of soldiers, and expect every second to feel a dozen bullets go tearing through you, as some of those spies did in the war."

Harry's uncle was an English sea captain, and was now making the family one of his annual visits.

"Indeed it is, my boy," he returned, in response to his nephew's observation. "I know how it feels, for I've been there; and it's not many men who have survived that experience to tell of it."

"Why, Uncle Frank," interjected little Fred, from the rug by the fireside, where he lay stretched out in lazy contentment, "I didn't know you were in the war."

"I wasn't," replied his uncle, seating himself near by, and rolling the little fellow over by a dexterous combination of push and tickle. "I didn't say so, did I?"

"Tell us about it, Uncle Frank," broke in Harry eagerly, drawing up his chair and putting aside his book.

It wasn't often they could get Uncle Frank to talk about his adventures. He always claimed that he'd never had any; but he'd been following the sea for twenty years, and both boys were sure he must have had lots of them. All sailor uncles had.

"Oh, do," pleaded Fred, recovering his equilibrium, and neglecting in his eagerness, to pitch into his big uncle as was customary when the latter teased him.

The captain puffed away at his pipe a few moments in thoughtful silence.

"Well, boys," he said finally, "there isn't an awful lot to tell; but it's the closest I ever came to passing in my checks, and if you want the story, you shall have it.

"It's all of twenty years ago, and I was very young, a mere boy, at the time. I had shipped on the *Sophie*, a bark belonging to an intimate friend of grandfather's, so I had a pretty comfortable berth.

"The particular occurrence I have reference to happened during a stop we made at Havana. Cuba has long been characterized by political disturbances, and probably always will be so long as the Dons hold them down, and one of the periodical insurrections happened to be in full blast at the time of our arrival.

"We'd heard that Havana was under martial law, but a man gets cramped after staying a long time on shipboard, and we longed to stretch our legs on dry land. So some of us got shore leave, including your uncle Frank.

"After spending a few hours on shore, I began to think of getting back to the ship. I'd got separated from my mates, but that didn't worry me at all.

"Well, sir, I was walking leisurely through the streets when suddenly I heard a shot, and then the noise of a lively scuffle. I naturally quickened my pace to see what the row was about.

"Turning down a side street, I came upon a man sprawled out on the pavement, face down. Near his outstretched right hand was a small revolver, which I decided must be the one I had heard fired a moment before.

"I was naturally a tender hearted chap, and kneeling by the fallen man, I turned him over and lifted his head. There's something about a dead man which can seldom be mistaken, and it hardly needed a glance to convince me that the man in my arms was past all earthly assistance.

"As I laid the poor fellow gently down, I noticed a big hole in his side, through which the blood was slowly oozing.

"I drew a long breath and stood up, and then for the first time discerned a file of gaily uniformed Spanish soldiers approaching at a double quick.

"Now, I hadn't the slightest idea that I'd be connected in any way with the murder, so you can imagine my surprise when the soldiers seized me with no gentle hands and hustled me off.

"I didn't dare resist. They were ugly

looking fellows, and brought their bayonets into unpleasantly close proximity. I protested vigorously, however, against my arrest, both in English and in the extremely limited stock of Spanish at my command. They paid no attention to me, though, and when we reached the prison I was roughly thrust into a cell.

"There was absolutely no furniture in it, barring kind of a straw pallet, so I sat on that and thought the matter over.

"The whole thing was so sudden, so entirely unexpected, that I hadn't the slightest idea of what I should do or what my captors would do.

"I was not left long in doubt.

"About half an hour later, I heard the tramp of feet, and an instant later the cell door creaked open, and half a dozen murderous looking scoundrels conducted me to what was apparently the executive chamber of the prison.

"There sat some eight or ten gaudily attired officers, and I soon became aware that they were there to decide on what should be done with me.

"The trial was a mere farce. I wasn't permitted to plead, and could talk so little Spanish that I couldn't have said a great deal anyhow.

"I could understand most of their lingo, however; quite enough to learn that I was found guilty of murder, and condemned to be shot at eight o'clock the following morning.

"I tell you, it just about took my knees from under me. The room swam before my eyes, and I hardly realized that I was being led back to the cell a condemned man.

"I realized it a moment later, however, when the cell door clanged shut, and I was left alone without the vestige of a light, and with only my thoughts for company, and they were anything but cheerful company, you'd better believe.

"I thought of everything wrong I had ever done in my life. My misdeeds seemed to troop slowly by me. Most of them had seemed very trivial once, but now they appeared like terrible crimes.

"Then my thoughts reverted to my far away home in England, the dear old father and mother, and my sister Bess, who had married your father just a year or two before, and was then living in the States. It had been a long time since I'd shed any tears, but I think I cried enough in the next hour to last any ordinary man a lifetime.

"I fell asleep finally from sheer exhaustion, but slept fitfully and awoke early.

"How miserable I felt! I hadn't a watch with me, and it seemed as if it *must* be nearly eight o'clock. I nerved myself for the ordeal. I would show those contemptible Spaniards how an English sailor could die. I was weak no longer.

"Time passed. It seemed an eternity to me. The seconds gradually became

minutes; the minutes, hours—aye, hours, for I must have waked up about four, and not until shortly before eight did they take any notice of me,

"Again came that measured tramp, tramp, and once more the door was opened. This time my escort led me out to the prison yard.

"How delightfully fresh and sweet the air was! How brightly the sun was shining! Everything seemed endowed with gladness and beauty. And I—I was to die an ignominious death in this foreign land, with no friend near, to transmit any last message to those loved ones across the sea.

"I was strong now. My step was as firm as that of the soldiers.

"At the end of the yard was a high stone wall, and thither was I conducted and placed with my back against it. A file of soldiers was already drawn up, under the command of a dapper looking Spanish lieutenant.

"Suddenly a slight stir arose inside the prison, and the lieutenant hesitated.

"At that moment the heavy door leading into the courtyard swung open, and a straight, soldierly figure strode into view.

"A glance showed me who this new comer was. The uniform, the sword, the cocked hat, the decorations on his breast, were unmistakable. It was the English consul himself.

"He was an imposing figure as he stood between me and the firing party, his flashing eyes fixed on the lieutenant in command, who saluted him politely.

"'Well, sir,' said he, in calm, even tones, 'I have just got wind of this outrage, and trust I have arrived in time to accomplish two things: to save this young man's life, and to save your government from getting into the worst scrape they ever got into in all their lives.'

"I stood there an interested spectator. I no longer feared death; it seemed as if the arrival of my country's representative has precluded all possibility of their carrying out my sentence.

"But, had it?

"The lieutenant gravely showed the consul his warrant. It bore the governor's signature and a dreadfully official looking seal.

"'This thing's no good,' the consul exclaimed. 'You will have to get your governor to rescind the order. This young man is a British subject, and I demand his release.'

"'You are too late, senor,' replied the officer. 'I have my orders and must obey,' and turning to the expectant soldiers he gave a sharp, quick word of command.

"Instantly a dozen rifles were leveled at my breast.

"Hope died within me.

"'At least,' the consul said, 'you will allow me to shake hands with this young man before he dies.'

"I cannot refuse that," the lieutenant replied

"The consul approached me, and I held out my hand. I felt glad that I was to be permitted to once more grasp the hand of a fellow Englishman, ere those grim looking tubes hurled their messengers of death. It seemed almost a boon.

"As the consul reached me, instead of seizing my hand, he thrust his own into an inner pocket, and the next second he had drawn out a neatly folded Union Jack, as the British flag is called.

"Another instant and he had thrown it over me, and I heard him say, 'Fire, if you dare!' His very tone was a menace.

"Ground arms!" the lieutenant said savagely.

"I was led back to my cell, and shortly after had a call from the consul, to whom I told my story.

"On learning the circumstances the governor granted me a reprieve, and a day later I was released with profuse apologies.

"I called on the consul to thank him for saving my life, and then sought out my ship. As I got down to the docks I saw a black hulled man of war in the offing, flying the cross of St. George. It didn't require very shrewd guessing to conclude that the apologetic action of the Spanish authorities was largely influenced by her arrival."

"But what became of the consul, Uncle Frank?" asked Harry, when the story was finished.

"He died of fever a year or two later, so I never saw him again; but no matter how long I live I can never forget him, nor the time when my life was saved by the Union Jack!"



THE CHRISTMAS KISS.

Close to the hearth, hung two little socks,
Of two chubby boys, with curly brown locks,
Who had just crept into their bed,
They rolled, and tossed, and prattled like boys,
Of tops, and sleds, and childish toys,
And then they covered their heads.

One hastened on to the City of Nod,
Where old Father Time, with his magical rod,
Sits on his kingly throne,
The other waited with wide open eyes,
Then slipped out of bed, in glad surprise,
To find he was all alone.

Two little bare feet crept over the floor,
And their owner glanced at the half open door,
Then a tiny sock pinned to the wall;
"This one is for mama"—the clock struck eleven,
"And give her this kiss; you'll find her in Heaven
"No matter how late you call."

If old St. Peter would tell all he knew,
He would say that an angel his gates passed through,
And left a heaven of bliss,
To go to that room, to that chubby faced child,
And look in his eyes, so tender and mild,
As she took for herself that kiss!

Foster Coates.

THE YOUNG SALESMAN.*

By Horatio Alger, Jr.,

Author of "The Island Treasure," "Rupert's Ambition," "Ragged Dick," etc

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

SCOTT WALTON, an English boy of sixteen, sails for America with his father, who dies of consumption during the voyage. The boy is thus left practically on his own resources.

On reaching New York, Scott comes across Ezra Little, a cousin of his mother, who gives him a position in his dry goods store, where the boy rapidly becomes proficient as a salesman.

The only pay Scott receives is his board and lodging with the Littles, who treat him contemptuously as a poor relation. Mr. Little's son, Loammi, is particularly discourteous to Scott, who, however, goes up a peg in his estimation by the younger Little's becoming aware of the friendly relations existing between Scott and the wealthy Justin Wood, whose acquaintance Scott has made through both having been victimized by a swindler.

An elderly relative of the Littles, Seth Lawton, comes to the city, but as he is not fashionably clad, they conclude that he also is poor, and treat him with scant courtesy.

Mr. Little allows his son but a very limited amount of spending money, which bothers Loammi, as he is a young man of extravagant tastes.

Yielding to temptation he steals his mother's pocketbook, and after appropriating the contents, places it in Scott's room. When the loss is discovered Loammi throws suspicion on his cousin, which results in the searching of Scott's room, and the discovery of the empty purse.

Scott is accused of the theft, and in spite of his indignant denial, he is summarily deprived of both home and position.

He calls to acquaint his cousin Seth with his misfortune, and, to his dismay, learns that Mr. Lawton has gone West to be away a month.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW HOME.

"ID you wish to see Mr. Lawton about something important?" asked Mrs. Mead.

"Yes, I wished to ask his advice. I have lost my place."

"At Mr. Little's store?"

"Yes."

"I never liked Mr. Little.

I am glad Willie has another position."

"Have you a small room vacant, Mrs. Mead? I have left Mr. Little's house also, and I must find a room somewhere."

"I have a small hall bedroom on the third floor."

"What rent do you charge?"

"Two dollars a week usually, but to you I will make it a dollar and a half."

"Then I will take it. Can I go up at once and leave my valise?"

"Yes; I will show the way."

The room was small, as Mrs. Mead had described it, but it was scrupulously clean. Scott felt that he would be very well satisfied with it, if only he could continue to pay the rent. It was certainly pleasanter than the room he had occupied at Ezra Little's.

"You must dine with us tonight, Mr. Walton," said Mrs. Mead hospitably. "Willie will be glad to see you, and then you can tell us how you came to leave the store."

As soon as he was settled Scott went out and began to look for a position. He bought a morning paper, and looked over the advertisements of "Help Wanted."

He took down several names, and began to call in rotation. In several instances he found the places already filled. In one place he was offered two dollars and a half a week, which he knew it would be idle to accept, as it would do little more than pay his room rent.

In one place he was asked where he had worked last.

"At Little's dry goods store on Eighth Avenue," he answered.

"Why did you leave?"

"Because of a disagreement with Mr. Little."

"I don't think we shall require your services," said the merchant coldly.

He turned away, as if to intimate that the conference was at an end.

Scott was depressed. He saw that any explanation he might give of his leaving his former place would only injure him. Yet almost everywhere the question would be asked.

This made him feel all the more that he had been very unjustly treated by Ezra Little. He had been required to plead guilty to a theft which he had not committed, and to replace the money lost with money of his own. He had very properly

*The first 18 chapters of this story appeared in the October and November issues of THE ARGOSY, which will be forwarded to any address on receipt of 20 cents.

declined to do this, and now he was thrown out of employment, with very little chance of securing another place.

Several days passed, and Scott must have made application for a hundred situations. But his luck did not improve. One obstacle was a general business depression which made employers averse to hiring new employees.

And all the while his scanty funds were diminishing. He sought out cheap restaurants and limited his orders to the barest necessities, but still his money melted away till at length he was reduced to fifty cents. Besides his week was about out, and he would be called upon to pay a second week's rent.

This was of course out of the question. Poor Scott was deeply perplexed. He began to think it would be better if he had complied with Ezra Little's demand for the five dollar bill. It was about gone now, and he was without an income.

He chanced to be passing the Gilsey House at four o'clock in the afternoon when he heard his name called.

Looking up, he recognized the familiar face of Justin Wood, whom he had not met for some weeks.

"I am glad to see you once more, Scott," said the young man cordially. "Why haven't you called upon me?"

"I did call once, but I did not find you in."

"It must have been when I was making a short visit to Philadelphia. But now come in and give an account of yourself. How does it happen that you are in the streets at this hour?"

"Because, Mr. Wood," answered Scott gravely, "I have lost my place."

"Then you have a story to tell. Come in and tell me all about it."

He led the way into the hotel, and Scott followed him into the reading room.

"Now take a seat at the window," said Justin Wood, pointing to an arm chair, "and tell me why you were discharged."

Scott told the story in as few words as possible.

"This money, which Mr. Little wished you to give up, was a part of what you recovered from that swindler at Staten Island, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I could certify to its belonging to you. Do you wish me to do so?"

"I don't want to go back to Mr. Little's if I can find another place. Besides, it will still be said that the pocketbook was found in my room."

"Have you any idea who put it there?"

"Yes; I think it was put there by Loammi."

"That is my own conclusion."

"But I don't see how I can bring it home to him."

"There will be a difficulty. If you could get evidence of his having changed a five dollar bill about that time, now——"

"I don't see how I can do that. It happened a week since."

"Where are you living now?"

"I have a room on West Sixteenth Street, at the house of a Mrs. Mead, but I shall have to leave it tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Because I have no money to pay the rent for a second week."

"How much is it?"

"A dollar and a half."

"I might be willing to lend you as much as that," said Justin Wood, smiling.

"Thank you, sir, but I shall need money to buy my meals besides."

"Then I think I shall have to come to your assistance."

Justin Wood put his hand in his pocket, and drew out two five dollar bills.

"That will tide you over for the present," he said.

"But," said Scott, "ought I to accept so much? I don't know when I shall be able to repay you."

"Then we had better consider it a gift."

Seth expressed his gratitude, but the young man made light of it.

"It is hardly worth mentioning," he said.

"If it will do you good I am glad. Now you must come in and take some dinner with me. I have eaten nothing since breakfast, and am almost famished."

The young man ordered a plain, but most appetizing dinner, to which Scott and himself did equal justice. Scott, too, had eaten nothing since breakfast, and that breakfast had been a meager one.

After dinner the two friends hailed a car and went up town. They spent an hour in Central Park. Mr. Wood proposed to walk back, and Scott accompanied him.

"Would you mind if I called at Mr. Little's house?" asked Scott. "There may be a letter for me from Cousin Seth."

"Do so by all means, Scott."

Scott rang the bell, and the door was opened by Ellen.

Her eye brightened when she saw Scott, whom she liked much better than Loammi.

"I am glad to see you, Scott," she said.

"And where are you living now?"

"I am boarding on West Sixteenth Street."

"And have you got another place?"

"Not yet. I suppose you heard why I left the house."

"Yes, I did, and it's a shame."

"Did you hear that Mrs. Little's pocketbook was found in my room?"

"Yes, I did, and I know who put it there."

"Who was it?" asked Scott eagerly.

"Only an hour before, I myself saw Loammi coming out of your chamber. He pretended that he went there expecting to see you."

"Did you tell Mr. Little that?"

"No; but I will if you want me to."

"I may ask you to do it some time. Do you think Loammi took the money?"

"I do that. All this week he's been unusually flush of cash. It's easy to guess where it came from."

"And I have had to suffer for his theft. Oh, by the way, Ellen, has any letter come here for me?"

"There was one came this morning. I'll get it for you."

Scott looked at the postmark of the letter, and saw that it was from Chicago.

CHAPTER XX.

SCOTT IS VINDICATED.

SCOTT opened the letter, which proved to be brief. It was dated at the Sherman House, Chicago, and ran thus:

I am called away suddenly on business, and may be absent for a month. Should you need to consult me on any subject direct to me here, as letters will be forwarded if I am absent from the city.

COUSIN SETH.

Scott showed the letter to Mr. Wood.

"I shall be glad to make the acquaintance of Mr. Lawton," said Justin. "He is evidently a good friend of yours."

"If he were here now he might get me a place. I don't stand much chance by myself."

"I must see if I can't find some temporary work for you to do. Suppose we take an ice cream. Do you know any good place near by?"

"There is one on Sixth Avenue."

"Very well, we will go there."

Scott led the way to the place already referred to, frequented by his cousin, Loammi. When they entered Scott saw Loammi seated at a table in the rear part of the saloon.

He espied the new arrival, and was evidently surprised to meet Scott in such a place.

"Hallo, Scott!" he called out.

"Good evening, Loammi," returned Scott coolly.

"Goin' to take an ice cream?"

"Yes."

"I say, are you working yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then how can you afford to buy ice cream?" Loammi was about to ask, but the presence of Justin Wood checked him. Mr. Wood was handsomely dressed, and looked like a man of means.

"I wonder where Scott picked him up," thought Loammi. He wished to be introduced, but Scott did not give any encouragement in that direction.

Loammi, having no good excuse to stay, rose and left the saloon.

"So that's your cousin?" remarked Justin Wood.

"Yes."

"He looks sly. I am something of a judge of faces, and I don't like his."

"I suppose I am prejudiced against him," said Scott. "I don't think I could ever like him."

Scarcely had Loammi left the saloon, when Scott was surprised to see Ezra Little and his wife enter.

Mrs. Little first caught sight of Scott and spoke in a low tone to her husband.

Ezra Little, turning his glance in the direction of Scott, eyed him severely.

"So this is where you spend your ill-gotten money," he said, not noticing that Scott was in the company of the fashionably dressed young man sitting on the opposite side of the table.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Justin Wood, "but it is my money that is being spent."

"I was not aware that you were in the boy's company," said Ezra Little respectfully, for he saw that Mr. Wood was a gentleman of social position. "I must explain that your companion left my house a week since under discreditable circumstances."

"He told me the circumstances. You assumed that the money he had in his possession was stolen."

"There can hardly be a doubt of it. There was a five dollar bill—and the missing pocketbook contained a five dollar bill."

"I am personally cognizant of the fact that the money was his own. Indeed, I helped to recover it for him from a swindler who had robbed him of it."

"This does not explain the pocketbook being found in his chamber."

"Where your son put it."

"This is a strange charge to make, sir. Have you any grounds for making it?"

"Scott and I called at your house this evening. The servant said that an hour before the discovery of the pocketbook your son was seen by her coming out of Scott's room."

Ezra Little looked startled, and Mrs. Little looked distressed.

"Moreover, I think if you inquire you will find that some of the stolen money was disposed of in this saloon. Your son only went out ten minutes since. Suppose you inquire whether he has changed a five dollar bill here recently."

"I will do so."

Ezra Little went up to the cashier.

"I understand," he said, "that my son comes in here frequently."

"Yes, sir; he was here this evening."

"Can you call to mind whether you have ever changed a five dollar bill for him?"

"I did so about a week since. Was there anything wrong about the bill?"

"I only asked out of curiosity."

Ezra was a hard man, but he was not altogether unjust.

"Scott," he said, "I think there may have been some mistake about your taking the pocketbook. If you will call at the store tomorrow I will see about taking you back."

Scott bowed, but did not speak. He felt

that he could never again be contented in Mr. Little's employment.

When they left the saloon he asked, "What do you advise me to do about going back, Mr. Wood?"

"Don't go," said Justin Wood promptly. "I will stand by you, and see if I can't get you something better."

"Thank you, sir. I don't want to go back if I can help it. But I am glad my innocence has been proved."

"I fancy your cousin will find himself in hot water."

Loammi was already at the house when his father and mother came in. He had no suspicion of trouble, but was eager to tell his father that he had seen Scott.

He did not observe the unusual sternness on Mr. Little's face.

"Pa," he said, "I saw Scott tonight."

"Where did you see him?"

"At an ice cream saloon on Sixth Avenue. His money seems to have lasted him pretty well."

"What were *you* doing there?" was his father's unexpected question.

"Getting an ice cream," answered Loammi, in surprise.

"So your money seems to have lasted pretty well also," said his father.

"An ice cream costs only ten cents, pa."

"How many times have you been there within a week?"

"Once or twice, I believe," answered Loammi, wondering what his father meant by his strict cross examination.

"Are you sure you have not been there every evening?"

"I don't think so."

"Have you ever had a bill changed there?"

"I don't know what you mean, pa."

But Loammi began to fear that he did understand, and he turned pale.

"Where," asked his father sternly, "did you get the five dollar that you got changed there a week ago today?"

"I don't know anything about any five dollar bill."

Loammi looked frightened.

"Wasn't it the money you found in your mother's pocketbook?"

"But Scott took that, pa. You know the pocketbook was found in his room."

"Yes, by you. You knew just where to look for it, for you concealed it there."

"Oh, pa, who told you any such wicked story about me?"

"Go down stairs and ask Ellen to come up here."

Loammi would willingly have been excused from doing this, but he knew there was no alternative.

When Ellen appeared Mr. Little said, "Do you remember the evening when the pocketbook was found in Master Scott's room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had Scott been in his room that evening?"

"I think not, sir."

"Had any one else been in the room?"

"I saw Loammi coming out from the room about half past eight."

"Oh, what a story!" ejaculated Loammi, in perturbation.

"It is true, sir," said Ellen firmly.

"I have no doubt of it. That will do, Ellen."

"Now, what have you to say?" demanded Ezra Little, addressing his son. "Did you or did you not take the pocket-book?"

"Yes, sir," answered Loammi reluctantly.

"And you had the meanness to throw suspicion on your cousin. I am ashamed of you."

Loammi made no reply, for the very good reason that he had nothing to say.

"I have myself seen Scott this evening, and I also learned from the keeper of the ice cream saloon that you changed a five dollar bill there a week since. I have told Scott to come back to the store. As for you, you deserve to be punished. I shall therefore reduce your allowance from a dollar a week to fifty cents till the sum you stole has been made up. Now you can go up stairs to bed."

Loammi shed tears of vexation.

"Now Scott will be crowing over me," he thought to himself. "I can't stand it, I think I will run away."

But he was spared this humiliation.

Scott went into Mr. Little's store the next day and sought the proprietor.

"You can come back to work on Monday morning," said Ezra, "and you can go round to the house this evening."

"Thank you, sir, but I have got another place."

"Another place? Where?"

"With Tower, Douglas & Co."

Ezra Little was very much surprised, for the firm mentioned was in the wholesale line and stood very high.

"Mr. Wood, the gentleman that was with me last evening recommended me."

"Very well," said Mr. Little curtly.

"You will bear in mind that I offered you your position back. Of course if you lose your new place I can make no promises."

"Then I will try not to lose it."

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW PLACE.

THE house of Tower, Douglas & Co. occupied a very high position in New York, and was known by reputation all over the country. The firm was liberal and considerate, and there were plenty of boys and young men who sought to enter their establishment.

Rich men sometimes offered the services of their sons, but Mr. Tower was never willing to accept them.

"A boy who works for nothing," he said, "is worth only what he receives. He

loses his self respect and has no ambition to rise."

Generally, however, the wages paid to beginners were small, not over three or four dollars a week.

Of course it was impossible for Scott to live on such pay. Justin Wood was a relative of Mrs. Tower, and being personally liked by her husband, was the better able to secure favors.

When he obtained Scott's engagement he said, "Now as to the rate of compensation, Mr. Tower; how much are you willing to pay my young friend?"

"We usually pay three dollars a week. We will stretch a point and make it four in the case of young Walton."

"I want you pay him ten dollars a week."

Mr. Tower looked amazed.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "You must be crazy."

"The boy is wholly dependent on what he earns."

"That may be, but I am under no obligation to support him."

"True," said Justin Wood smiling, "but you may charge the extra six dollars to me."

"That will make a difference, but suppose our other employees find it out. Then there will be dissatisfaction."

"Then let him understand that he is only paid ten dollars as a special favor to me, and that the arrangement must be kept strictly secret."

"That will do. But suppose he does not meet our expectations?"

"He will. You need be under no apprehensions. I am something of a judge of boys, and I can assure you that he has a talent for business."

"I will take your word for it until I have a chance to judge for myself."

When Scott was informed that he would receive ten dollars a week he was delighted and thanked Mr. Tower warmly.

"I am afraid I can't earn that sum, sir," he said.

"I know you can't," said the merchant; "but Mr. Wood is a cousin of my wife, and it is on his account that I pay you so liberal a salary. I expect you to work zealously so that you may deserve it."

"Thank you, sir; I will."

Scott spoke confidently, and Mr. Tower was pleased with his modest self assurance.

"I don't think Justin is deceived in the boy," he said to himself. "At any rate I will give him a fair chance."

Six months later when Justin Wood called, and asked how Scott was progressing, Mr. Tower said: "He is a born salesman. He is quick, shrewd, intelligent, and above all he inspires confidence in customers. We will hereafter pay him ten dollars a week on our own account, and will not ask you to reimburse us. But we will not raise him above that till the end of the year."

"That is perfectly satisfactory. I have only one favor to ask."

"What is that?"

"Send him on the road as soon as you consider him competent. I think he will make a successful drummer."

"That is my intention. Some of my salesmen can never go outside the store. Young Walton will make a good record outside."

Scott had been with the new firm for a month when Seth Lawton returned from Chicago. He was much pleased at Scott's success, but understood very well that he was indebted for it to the friendly offices of Justin Wood.

"Do your best, Scott," he said. "You are at the bottom of the ladder, but you must climb. Your future depends on yourself. Do you ever see anything of Loammi?"

"I have met him two or three times. He seems surprised, and I think a little disappointed at my success."

"Does he know how much you receive?"

"No; I promised to keep that secret. But he knows that I live in a comfortable boarding house on Lexington Avenue, and have a good room. If he knew I was paid ten dollars a week he would want to borrow money. His father has reduced his allowance to fifty cents a week, and he complains that he might as well be a news boy. 'Don't you think the old man is mean?' he asked me yesterday."

"And what did you reply?"

"I told him that I didn't care to criticize his father."

"Good! I see you are discreet. What is Ezra going to do with his son? Will he train him up to business?"

"Loammi says he is going to Columbia College, or perhaps to Yale."

"He will never get there. He won't study hard enough."

"So I think, Cousin Seth. I wish I had the chance."

"Would you really like to go to college, Scott," asked Seth Lawton thoughtfully.

"No, I think not as I am at present situated. I could not enter before I am eighteen, and by that time I shall be well advanced in the knowledge of business."

"I think you are right, but I advise you to study, and read instructive books in your leisure hours."

"I am doing that, Cousin Seth, and I am thinking soon of taking a commercial course in some business college."

"Do so, and I will pay the bill for tuition."

"I can afford to pay that myself, cousin. You are too generous. That is what keeps you poor."

Seth Lawton smiled.

"Oh, I am not so unselfish as you suppose," he said. "I make enough to live comfortably."

"Yes, Cousin Seth, but you ought to be

saving up money. You are no longer a young man."

"I should think not, at fifty five."

"And suppose you get sick, how are you to live?"

"Don't you think Ezra Little would take care of me?"

Scott laughed.

"I am afraid not," he answered, "but you have another relative who would be glad to help you."

"Meaning yourself."

"Yes."

"Good boy!" said Seth, and he looked moved. "Yes, I think you would be willing to help me if I were in need, but at present you have only enough for yourself."

"I am saving a little money, cousin."

"What, out of ten dollars a week?"

"Yes. Ten dollars a week is quite a liberal salary."

"You are right. It will do you no harm to be economical. By the way, has Ezra Little never returned to you the forty dollars you placed in his hands?"

"No."

"You should ask him for it."

"I would rather not," said Scott, shrinking.

"But it is rightfully yours. He has no excuse for keeping it."

"I don't think I would like to speak to him on the subject," said Scott thoughtfully.

"Then I will."

In fact, Mr. Lawton lost no time in doing as he proposed. He called at Ezra Little's house and broached the subject.

"Ezra," he said, "I understand that you have forty dollars belonging to Scott."

"I don't look upon it in that light," said Mr. Little coldly. "I gave the boy a place in my store."

"And all you gave him was his board."

"True; but that was more than he earned."

"I don't agree with you. It strikes me, Ezra, that it is small business to take the boy's small capital and appropriate it to your own use."

Ezra Little looked incensed.

"Mr. Lawton," he said, "it strikes *me* that your interference is impertinent."

"On the contrary, as Scott has no one else to speak up for him, I consider that as his near relative, it is my duty to do it."

"If you had attended to your own affairs, instead of meddling with others, you would not be in danger of going to the poorhouse, as you are at present."

"Am I?" asked Seth, looking amused. "You seem to know a good deal about my affairs."

"I don't suppose you have a hundred dollars in the world. If you should be in need you mustn't expect me to help you."

"I shall not. You are pretty safe on that score, Ezra."

"I see you are poor and proud. However, I am glad to hear it."

"Then suppose we return to Scott's money. Are you prepared to give it back?"

"No, I am not."

"I don't think it will do you any good. Robbing the orphan——"

"Mr. Lawton, I will not submit to such insinuations. If Scott should lose his position, as he is likely to do if he is guided by your advice, I will help him out of the money in my hands."

"Very well; I will hold you to that. However, I don't think he is likely to be placed in that predicament."

"How much does he receive from Tower, Douglas & Co.?"

"More than you paid him. However, I will not occupy any more of your time. If you become ashamed of your meanness, you can let me know."

"Seth Lawton, I won't stand any more of your impertinence. You appear to forget who I am."

"I am not likely to forget who and what you are, Ezra. Good evening!"

"The beggar!" soliloquized the merchant. "He need never expect any favors from me. He will yet repent his impertinence."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE POOR INVENTOR.

HAD Scott spent all his salary he could not have been charged with extravagance, for ten dollars a week in a large city melts away, but he made it a matter of principle to save two dollars weekly. So at the end of a year he had one hundred dollars, and was fairly well clothed.

It was on the last day of the year that he received a summons to the office.

He answered it with some little trepidation, for it was possible that the firm had decided to dispense with his services.

"Take a seat, Scott," said Mr. Tower pleasantly, when he entered the office. "I believe you have been with us for a year."

"Yes, sir."

"We are quite satisfied with you. You have shown ability as a salesman, and have taken an intelligent interest in the business. For this reason we are disposed to promote you."

"Thank you, sir," said Scott, much gratified.

"Though you are unusually young, we are disposed to try you on the road. How would you like that?"

"I should like nothing better."

"Your compensation, if you are successful, would be considerably greater than you are now paid. How much, will depend on your success."

"I should be quite content with that arrangement, sir."

"We shall start you out probably within a week. One of our salesmen is sick, and we shall put you on his route. You will go to Cleveland and intermediate places. You

will receive your instructions in due time."

"Thank you, sir."

Scott left the office much elated. He knew that there was no drummer employed by the firm less than twenty three years of age, while he was barely eighteen. He resolved to succeed if success were possible, for he felt that this would give him an important position, and an excellent income.

"How fortunate I did not stay with Cousin Ezra," he thought. "If I had, probably I should not be receiving more than six dollars a week now."

Scott, as has already been said, boarded on Lexington Avenue. He occupied a small room, and paid but five dollars a week, but those who occupied the larger rooms paid in proportion to the accommodation enjoyed.

In the room just opposite his lived a man of about forty, whom Scott had met more than once on the stairs, but did not feel well acquainted with.

Just after supper he was preparing to go out when there was a knock at the door.

Opening it, he found that the caller was his opposite neighbor. He was looking pale and depressed.

"Can you lend me a few matches?" he asked.

"Certainly, Mr. Babcock; won't you step in and sit down?" said Scott cordially.

The visitor hesitated, then said slowly, "I will do so, but I shall not be very good company."

"I am glad of the chance of making your acquaintance," said Scott. "I have only seen you on the stairs heretofore."

"I don't think you will see much more of me," said the visitor soberly.

"Why not? Are you intending to move away?"

"It is not exactly a matter of choice," said Babcock.

Scott could guess why, for his visitor was very poorly clad. His suit was frayed and rusty, and there were unmistakable marks of poverty about his whole appearance.

Scott felt delicate about speaking of this. He contented himself with saying, "I am sorry to hear it."

"The fact is," went on Babcock, with a sigh, "I am a failure, and have just begun to realize it."

"If you wouldn't mind telling me about it," said Scott gently, "I can at least sympathize with you."

"Sympathy will be welcome. It is long since I have had any."

He paused, and presently continued;

"You must know that I am an inventor. I need say no more to satisfy you that I am a visionary and unpractical man."

"I don't know about that. There have been many successful inventors."

"And I might be one but for one unfortunate circumstance."

"What is that, sir?"

"I have used up all my money, and though the invention is perfected, I am unable to reap the benefit of it."

"Would you mind telling me the nature of your invention?"

"It is a window fastener. You may think it a trifle, but it is the small inventions which from their nature come into common use, and thus pay the best."

"I can understand that. How long have you been at work on your invention?"

"A year. I had a little money when I began, and it has supported me while I was at work. Now that the invention is perfected I am without funds. I may as well be plain, and say that I cannot pay my next week's board."

"Couldn't you get some man with money to help you?"

"It is what I have been hoping for. In fact I called yesterday on a prominent merchant, and laid the matter before him."

"Who was it, Mr. Babcock?"

"Ezra Little."

Scott look surprised.

"He is a relative of mine," he said.

"How did he treat you?"

"He listened to what I had to say, and promised to write to me. He did so. Shall I show you the letter?"

"If you are willing."

The inventor drew from his pocket a typewritten letter, and showed it to Scott. It ran thus:

MR. HENRY BABCOCK.

DEAR SIR:

I have thought over the small invention you showed me yesterday. I doubt if there is any money in it, but as I presume you are in want I will give you thirty five dollars for it. I can stand the small loss, and it will tide you over till you can get a position that will support you.

Yours truly,

EZRA LITTLE.

"Mr. Little is not very liberal," said Scott, smiling.

"No," answered the inventor bitterly.

"Think of the year's labor I have spent upon it, and the prospect before me if I accept this paltry sum. With economy it would last me a month, and then what would become of me?"

"True, but there are other men besides Mr. Little, who might perhaps deal with you more generously."

"You are right, but I don't think you understand my position. My available funds are reduced to two dollars. Sometimes in my desperation I have thought I would go down to Brooklyn bridge, and end it all. I think I should have done so but for one thing."

"What is that?" asked Scott, beginning to show a strong personal interest in his unfortunate visitor.

"I have a little daughter—four years old. I must live for her."

"Yes, you must live for her, and yourself, too. You may yet be successful."

"Do you perhaps know of some capitalist?" asked the inventor eagerly.

"I know of a gentleman who is well supplied with money, and I will lay the matter before him. Meanwhile as you need money, accept this loan."

Scott drew from his pocket two five dollar bills and tendered them to Mr. Babcock.

"You have given me new life and new hope," said the inventor, his pale face brightening. "Who is the gentleman?"

"A Mr. Wood—Justin Wood. He lives at the Gilsey House, and he has been very kind to me. In fact I owe the position I hold to him."

"Is he—a practical man? Would he see the possibilities of my invention?"

"I can't say, but out of regard to me he would give it consideration."

"When can we see him? Excuse my impatience, but you can understand how much it means to me."

"I do, Mr. Babcock, and I will therefore go with you to his hotel this very evening, though we may possibly not find him in."

"If you will be so kind, I will get ready at once."

In five minutes they were on their way to the Gilsey House.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EZRA LITTLE'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

ARRIVED at the Gilsey House, Scott went into the reading room, thinking he might find Mr. Wood there. But he failed to see him.

"Whom are you looking for?" asked Edward Stripling, the telephone boy, who occupied one corner of the room.

"Mr. Wood."

"Perhaps you are the one he wanted to see. He told me to tell any one inquiring, that he would be back in fifteen minutes."

"Then we shan't have to wait long, Mr. Babcock."

The inventor took up a paper from the table, but he was so nervous that he could not concentrate his attention upon it.

Ten minutes later Justin Wood entered the room.

"I am glad to see you, Scott," was his cordial greeting.

"Thank you, Mr. Wood. I come on business. Let me introduce Mr. Babcock."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Babcock," said Wood courteously.

"Could we go up to your room? We won't keep you long."

"Certainly. Follow me."

Mr. Wood had a front room on the third floor—a pleasant apartment for which he paid a high rent.

"Now, Mr. Wood," began Scott, "I am going to ask your attention for ten minutes."

"I will give you fifteen, if necessary," said Wood, smiling.

Thereupon Scott told the story of the

inventor, to which Justin Wood listened attentively.

"Have you a model of your invention?" he asked, turning to Babcock.

"Here it is, sir."

The young man asked various questions which Babcock answered satisfactorily.

"I think well of your invention," said Mr. Wood, in conclusion. "Now, what do you want me to do?"

Scott answered.

"Mr. Babcock has exhausted all his means and is penniless," he said. "The invention is perfected, but he is not in a position to put it before the public. He has, to be sure, received offers of assistance from a gentleman whom we both know."

"To whom do you refer?"

"Ezra Little."

"Indeed! Is that liberal gentleman willing to help him?"

"He offers me thirty five dollars for the invention," said Babcock bitterly. "I have spent a whole year in perfecting it, and this is to be my compensation."

"I think you had better not trouble Mr. Little," observed Justin quietly. "How much money do you need to put it before the public?"

"If I had one hundred and fifty dollars," said the inventor hesitatingly, "I think I could manage. I would be willing to sell a one half interest for that sum."

"That would not be enough," said Wood decidedly.

"With it I should stand some chance of success."

"I will tell you what I will do. I will give you five hundred dollars for one third interest on condition that you work zealously to make it a success."

"Oh, sir, you are too generous," said Babcock, with emotion. "With that money I see my way clear."

"What would be your plan?"

"I can make arrangements with a responsible party to manufacture it, and will myself travel and put it before the public."

"I will risk it."

"I am sure, sir, that you will get your money back several times over."

"I hope so. I am not buying it for myself, but for a friend of mine."

Scott looked at him inquiringly.

"The friend is Scott Walton," he said, smiling. "Should it pay I shall deduct the five hundred dollars from the first money received in the way of profit, and then make over the whole investment to you, Scott. I hope it may make you rich."

"How can I thank you, Mr. Wood?" said Scott gratefully.

"Wait till you see whether you have anything to be grateful for."

"There is no doubt about that," said the inventor confidently. "You will excuse me for saying, Mr. Wood, that I shall work even harder for my young friend Walton than I would for you."

"That is just what I wish. I am al-

ready rich, while Scott has his fortune yet to make."

"I will help him to make it."

"Come round tomorrow, Mr. Babcock, at ten o'clock, and I will have the money ready. We will also have papers regularly drawn up, so that Scott's share of the investment may be secured to him. And now I shall have to bid you good evening as I have an engagement with a friend at the Union League Club."

The two went out.

The inventor was fairly radiant.

"Mr. Walton," he said, "you don't know what you have done for me. You have given me a new lease of life. When I came to your room tonight I was in a mood that might have led me to throw myself from the Brooklyn bridge. Mr. Little's cold blooded letter had much to do with bringing on that mood. I felt that there was no hope for me."

"And now?"

"Now I have hope—and confidence. I have a presentiment of success. I shall make myself rich and you also."

"I hope your presentiment will prove prophetic," said Scott, smiling. "I can assure you that a fortune will be welcome. At present I have only accumulated one hundred dollars."

"That's not bad for a young man of your age."

"Say a boy. I am not ashamed of being a boy."

"Remember I am speaking of my partner. I must speak of him with respect."

"Did I tell you I was going to leave the city for a time?"

"No. Why is it? You have not lost your place I hope."

"No, I am going to travel for the firm. If am lucky, I shall soon earn an excellent income."

"You are sure to do that."

"How can you tell that I will succeed?"

"I was not referring to your regular position. I was thinking of your interest in my invention."

"You are confident, then, of success?"

"I am quite confident of it."

"I hope you are right, mostly, however, on your account, for I think my future is tolerably secure."

"I see you have no idea of the value of your interest in my enterprise."

"I shall not think seriously of it, but I will welcome any good that may come to me from it."

"My life will be changed," said Babcock. "I shall at once send for my little Molly."

"Is that your little daughter?"

"Yes."

"Where is she now?"

"In the country. Now I shall feel justified in bringing her to the city. She is a sweet little girl."

"I am sure you will be happier for having her with you."

"Yes, you may well say that."

"By the way, have you answered Ezra Little's letter?"

"No; I shall answer it in person tomorrow, after I have concluded arrangements with your friend."

About two o'clock the next day the inventor took his way to Ezra Little's dry goods store on Eighth Avenue. He sent in his name and was admitted.

He was a welcome visitor, for Mr. Little, who was a practical man, had a fair conception of the value of his invention, and meant to make a fortune out of it—for himself. As for the poor inventor, he cared little for him.

Henry Babcock entered the merchant's presence, and was bidden to take a seat.

"I received a letter from you, Mr. Little," he said.

"Yes. I offered you thirty five dollars for your invention."

"That seems to me very small."

"Probably it is more than I shall make out of it, but you seemed to be in need, and I am willing to help you."

"Don't you think, however, you could let me have more? Thirty five dollars would not support me a month."

"It would give you time to look for a place."

"But, Mr. Little, think of the time I have spent—and the money!"

"That does not concern me," said the merchant coldly.

"I think I shall have to decline your offer."

"That is foolish. However, I will strain a point, and give you fifty dollars."

Henry Babcock shook his head.

"Mr. Little," he said triumphantly, "I have sold a one third interest in my invention for five hundred dollars."

Ezra Little looked amazed and disappointed. It was a chance of his life lost.

"What fool gave you that sum?" he asked roughly.

"A Mr. Wood, to whom your cousin, Scott Walton, introduced me."

"Why didn't you tell me that at first?" snarled Ezra Little. "Wood must have been a fool to be influenced by that boy. Good morning!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOAMMI HEARS GOOD NEWS.

ON the Monday succeeding, Scott started on his trip with a supply of samples and full instructions. His route extended as far as Cleveland, including Albany and the principal towns in New York State, besides some in Ohio.

He traveled slowly, having been told to make a thorough canvass of the places he visited.

He was everywhere well received. His bright, pleasant manner made friends, and though sometimes his youth proved at first an obstacle, in a short time he won the

confidence of customers. It became clear that he understood his business.

"You are rather young to represent such a large firm as Tower, Douglas & Co.," said a careful Scotch merchant in Syracuse.

"I think so myself," answered Scott, good humoredly.

"Have they any other drummers as young?"

"I don't think so. In fact I know they have not."

"How did they come to make an exception in your case?"

"I don't know, unless it was out of kindness."

"Then you don't think it was because you were extra smart?" asked the merchant pointedly.

"Time will show whether I am or not," said Scott, smiling.

"Well, I will ask you a few questions, and then I can judge for myself."

Scott answered these questions freely and intelligently. He seemed to understand the different qualities of the goods he carried, and would not allow himself to make any claims for them that could not be substantiated. As a result Mr. Cameron bought a large order.

"I begin to understand why you were selected," he said.

"I hope you think the firm was justified."

"I do. You understand your business, and you make no misrepresentations."

"Thank you sir."

"If ever you leave your present place I will give you a position."

"Thank you still more. I will remember it."

At Elmira Scott received the following in a letter from Mr. Douglas, the junior partner: "You are doing finely. You are beating the record."

This pleased Scott. He did not know whether he had done as well as was anticipated, but this reassured him.

Two days after Scott started on his mission Loammi entered the store on a visit instigated by curiosity. It was partly also at the suggestion of his father, who thought through Scott's influence he might redeem his error and obtain an interest in the invention, which he believed would be very profitable.

Entering the store, Loammi looked about him, and finally spoke to a young man near the door.

"Is a boy named Scott Walton employed here?" he asked.

The clerk addressed was a friend of Scott, and guessed who it was that was inquiring about him. He was tempted to play a joke on Loammi.

"There was a clerk here by that name," he answered slowly.

"Isn't he here now?"

"He left us two or three days since."

"Has he got another place?"

"I don't think so."

Loammi brightened up. It seemed too good news to be true. His despised cousin had been discharged.

Loammi could not have heard anything that would have pleased him more.

"Do you know why he was discharged?" he asked eagerly.

"No, I don't," answered the other, with a twinkle in his eye. "Do you know him?"

"Yes; he is a distant relation of mine."

"Then perhaps you can judge better than I why he did not give satisfaction."

"I am not at all surprised. He was too fresh. That was the matter with him."

"Dear me! How unfortunate!"

"Yes; he'll never stay long anywhere. Pa had him in his store for a while—Ezra Little's store, Eighth Avenue—but he was obliged to send him away."

"And are you Mr. Little's son?" asked the young clerk, with mock deference.

"Yes; I am his only son," answered Loammi loftily.

"Dear me! I am proud to know you. And I suppose you will some time own the store."

"Probably, though I am not sure but I may become a lawyer. Do you know where Walton lives?"

"No. There are so many in the store that I know the residences of very few."

Loammi took his departure in a very complacent frame of mind. He had always been jealous of Scott, and the intelligence that he had lost his place was very agreeable to him.

It so happened that on Broadway he met Seth Lawton, whom he had not seen for a good while. Under ordinary circumstances he would have taken no notice of him, but now he had an object in speaking to him.

"Good morning, Mr. Lawton," he said condescendingly.

"Oh, good morning, Loammi," rejoined the old man, who was short sighted, when he realized who it was that had addressed him.

"Where do you think I have been?"

"I am sure I cannot tell."

"I have been to the store of Tower, Douglas & Co., to call upon Scott."

"Indeed! That was very kind of you."

"And you can imagine my surprise to find that he had been discharged."

"Is it possible!" ejaculated Seth, who at once guessed how Loammi had been misled.

"Yes."

"That is a great pity. Perhaps your father will take him back into his store."

"I don't think he will. If he don't do for Tower, Douglas & Co., he won't do for pa."

"But the poor boy must live."

"Oh well," said Loammi carelessly, "he can get a chance to sell papers or—black boots."

"Surely your father would not allow his young cousin to sink to that employment."

"Pa wouldn't interfere. I have heard

him say that he has washed his hands of Scott. If he had behaved himself it would have been different."

"Poor boy! I must see what I can do for him."

"You'd better not, Cousin Seth. You are a poor man, and it will be all you can do to look after yourself."

"Still, Loammi, consider Scott's position."

"He must look out for himself. I advise you not to call round and ask pa to take him back."

"I must think what I can do for him."

"The old man feels pretty bad," thought Loammi. "Well, they're a good match. For my part I don't think much of poor relations."

Loammi hurried home to impart the welcome news to his father.

"What do you think, pa?" he burst out.

"Scott's lost his position."

"Is this true, Loammi?" asked his father, in some surprise.

"Yes, pa; I went to the store this morning, and one of the clerks told me."

"Do you know what was the matter?"

"Oh, I suppose he was too fresh. Now, I suppose, he will be trying to come back to you."

"I might agree to take him if he would come back on the old terms."

"You don't mean it, pa! After he has lost his place, too!"

"Oh well, I could look after him. He would be worth his board."

"One thing, he couldn't put on any airs after his disgrace. By the way, I met Mr. Lawton on Broadway."

"Cousin Seth?"

"Yes."

"Did he have anything to say about Scott's discharge?"

"He didn't appear to know anything about it till I told him."

"Do you know where Scott boards?"

"No."

"Oh well, he will probably be coming around to see me after a while. I should like to have him, as I want to get at that inventor through him."

"Do you think there's money in it, pa?"

"As I should manage it there might be," said his father cautiously.

Mr. Little looked for Scott from day to day, but three weeks passed and he heard nothing from him.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT NIAGARA FALLS.

ON his way back from Cleveland, Scott, having the necessary leisure, stopped a couple of days at Niagara Falls. He registered his name at the Clifton House on the Canada side.

He lost no time in visiting the objects of interest connected with the Falls, and at the close of the first day sat on the piazza, with the falls in sight.

A blond bearded young man of perhaps twenty five, evidently an Englishman, sat near by. He looked at Scott once or twice as if tempted to speak, but a certain reticence characteristic of his countrymen appeared to prevent.

Scott observed this, and made a remark by way of opening a conversation.

"Yes," answered the young man, "you are right. The Falls are grand. You Americans ought to be very proud of them."

"But," said Scott, smiling, "I am not an American."

The Englishman looked surprised, for Scott, though he had only been in America a year, had come to resemble the people among whom he had cast his lot.

"What, then, are you?" inquired his new acquaintance, looking puzzled.

"I was born in England."

"Indeed!" said the other. "Then we are countrymen."

"I am glad to know it," said Scott courteously.

"How long have you been in America, if I may ask?"

"A little more than a year."

"And do you live in Canada?"

"No, I live in New York."

"You are not—in business?" queried the Englishman, noticing his youthful appearance.

"Oh yes, I am employed by a New York firm."

"Then how do you happen—excuse my asking—to be here? But perhaps it is your vacation."

"No, I am traveling for the firm. I am a traveling salesman for the house of Tower, Douglas & Co."

"That is a large firm, I have heard."

"One of the largest in New York."

"I confess I am puzzled. You occupy such a responsible position, and yet you are so young."

"I believe my case is exceptional. I am the youngest traveler for our house."

"I rejoice in your success since you are an English boy. May I ask your name?"

Scott handed his new acquaintance a card like this:

SCOTT WALTON,

Representing

TOWER, DOUGLAS & Co.,

NEW YORK.

"Thank you," said the other.

He took from his pocket a card from which Scott learned that he was Lord Cecil Grant, Earl of Windermere.

"I am honored in making your acquaintance," said Scott. "May I say that you seem young to be an earl? I fancied all earls were at least fifty years of age."

"I wish that I had waited till fifty for my title," said the young Englishman gravely, "but my poor father died suddenly six months ago, and partly to dissipate my grief I came to America."

"Have you been here long, my lord?" asked Scott, not knowing exactly how to address his distinguished companion.

"Never mind the title," said the earl, smiling. "It comes awkwardly to an American to use it, and you are already half an American."

"What shall I call you, then?"

"You may call me Mr. Grant, if you like. If you come to know me better you may call me Cecil. I shall take the liberty, since you are a boy, to call you Scott."

As he spoke there was a winning smile upon his face, and Scott felt that he should like him.

"I will try to forget that you are an earl," he said, "and then I shall feel more at home with you."

"What do you say to a walk, Scott? The evening is too fine to spend here."

"I shall be delighted."

He put on his hat, and the two sauntered off together. They were both good walkers, and had covered several miles before they returned to the hotel.

"I wish I had met you before, Scott," said the earl familiarly. "Won't you tell me something about yourself, and your history. I am sure you have one."

Almost before he knew it Scott had told the story already familiar to the reader. The earl listened with evident interest.

"Really," he said, "it is worthy of telling in book form. That uncle of yours—"

"My mother's cousin," corrected Scott.

"No matter. We will say relative. He must certainly be a mean, disagreeable fellow, don't you know, and as to your cousin with the peculiar name—"

"Loammie."

"Yes, I never heard the name before. Well, he must be a cad."

"I think he is," said Scott, smiling; "but I assure you he considers himself infinitely above me."

"I shall not ask you for an introduction."

"He would like nothing better than to become acquainted with you, Mr. Grant."

"You compliment me. Well, here we are at the hotel. What are your plans for tomorrow. I hope you do not leave in the morning?"

"No; I shall spend another day here."

"Why not spend it together?"

"I should like nothing better," said Scott sincerely.

"Then we will do so. I will secure a carriage in the morning, and we will make a day of it."

He was as good as his word, and Scott had a delightful time. He almost succeeded in forgetting his companion's rank, and found him a congenial companion.

Just after supper, when the earl had gone up to his room, a pretentious looking man of middle age, who seemed to be continually trying to assert his claim to superiority, came up to Scott.

"Boy," he said. "I understand there is an English earl staying at the hotel."

"Yes, sir. It is the Earl of Windermere."

"Have you seen him! Could you point him out to me?"

"He has gone up to his room, but will probably be back almost immediately."

"How shall I know him?"

"He will come up and speak to me, and then we shall probably go out to walk together."

"Are you a friend of the earl?" asked Mr. Burton, in surprise.

"I think I may call myself so. We have been together all day."

Mr. Burton regarded Scott with new respect. He had unceremoniously called him "boy," but it was before he knew that he was a friend of an earl.

"Would you kindly introduce me?" he asked eagerly.

"I am not quite sure whether he would be willing," returned Scott, with hesitation.

"Would you mind asking him?"

"If you will let me know your name, sir."

"I am Nathan Burton, of Albany. I have been an alderman," said the other consequentially.

"I hope you may yet be mayor," answered Scott, amused.

"Stranger things have happened," rejoined Mr. Burton complacently. "Did you come over with the earl?"

"A year earlier," returned Scott gravely.

From this Mr. Burton inferred that they had been friends on the other side.

"And your name is—"

"Scott Walton."

"An aristocratic name!" thought the Albany alderman. "Are you related to the earl?"

"No, sir. We are only friends."

At this moment the earl entered the room and went up at once to Scott.

"Are you ready for a walk, Scott?" he said familiarly.

"Yes, but first—" and here in a low voice Scott communicated Mr. Burton's request.

The earl looked around at the alderman and seemed amused.

"Very well," he said, smiling.

At a signal Mr. Burton approached.

"My lord," said Scott formally, "allow me to present Mr. Alderman Burton, of Albany."

Mr. Burton bowed profoundly.

"I am glad to become acquainted with a representative American," said the earl in a dignified voice, quite different from his tone in talking with Scott.

"My lord earl, I feel very much honored to make your acquaintance," said Mr. Burton, with another profound bow.

"I believe you Americans have no titles," said the earl.

"No, my lord, but I should be in favor of having them."

"In that case you might become Earl of Albany."

"You do me proud, indeed you do, my lord," said the gratified alderman.

"I am sorry to leave you so soon, but my young friend and I propose to have a walk."

"Don't let me detain you, my lord. If I might dare to ask one favor——"

"What is it, sir?"

"If you would favor me with your card."

With a smile the earl produced the coveted bit of pasteboard and handed it to the alderman.

When they were fairly out of the hotel both laughed merrily.

"Do you want me to be as respectful as Mr. Alderman Burton?" asked Scott.

"No, be yourself, Scott. That will suit me better."

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ADVENTURE.

SCOTT intended to start on his homeward journey the next morning, but an hour before he was to leave he received a telegram to the following effect:

Wait for letter.

TOWER.

Scott understood at once that the letter would contain instructions from the firm, and therefore informed the earl that he would remain a day longer.

"That will suit me admirably," said the earl. "If you are at leisure, we will take a long drive."

"I shall have nothing to do till I receive my letter," answered Scott.

"Then you can join me?"

"I shall be glad to do so."

It turned out that the earl wished to ride across country to a point some twenty miles distant. What the attraction was it is not necessary here to state. Probably the trip was undertaken chiefly for the drive.

At the end of twenty miles a village was reached which contained a passable hotel. Here the two tourists dined, and did not leave on their return till about six o'clock.

"We shall be rather late," said the earl. "Still our horse is a good one, and we ought to reach the hotel in two hours, or little more."

"That won't be very late."

"Then we can stop on the way somewhere."

When the travelers had proceeded half a dozen miles on their way the horse suddenly showed signs of lameness. What had occasioned it neither could tell, but as he appeared to be in pain, it was decided upon consultation to stop at the next house, and make arrangements to pass the night. It would be easy to start again on the following morning with the horse they had, or, if necessary, a substitute. Neither felt in haste, and the time lost would not be serious.

The next house proved to be situated on the edge of the woods. It occupied a lonely location, and seemed in rather a dilapidated state. Everything about it bore an aspect of neglect.

Scott jumped from the carriage, and went to the door.

It was opened, after he had knocked two or three times, by a care worn woman of middle age. Her face was lined, and she wore a look of depression and discouragement.

"What's your will?" she asked.

"Our horse has fallen lame, and we would like to stop here over night, and let the horse rest. I see you have a barn."

"I don't know," said the woman slowly.

"We don't keep a hotel."

"I am quite aware of that, and we must apologize for intruding. We shall give you some trouble, but we are willing to pay for it. If five dollars will compensate you we will be glad to pay that sum for supper, lodging, and breakfast for ourselves, and accommodation for our horse."

The woman seemed surprised by the liberality of the offer. In such a household five dollars was a good deal of money.

"You can come in," she said, "and I will get you some supper. My man will soon be home, and if he is willing you can stay all night."

"I hope he will soon be back, as we would like to know what to depend upon."

"He'll be here in an hour likely."

"May we put the horse in the barn?"

"Yes, if you can do it yourself. There ain't no men folks round."

"Oh, yes, we will attend to it."

"I'll go right to work getting supper. I've got some eggs and bacon in the house, if that will do you."

"That will do very well, I think. You can give us some tea, too, I presume?"

"Yes, or you can have some whisky. My man always wants some."

"Thank you, but I think we should prefer tea."

"That's just as you like. I have tea for myself. My man won't drink it. He says it's only fit for women."

"Consider us women, then," said Scott, laughing. "I will go and tell my friend that you will receive us."

"If my man agrees."

"That is understood."

"What is your friend's name?"

"Mr. Grant," answered Scott, knowing that the earl would not care to have his rank known in such a place. It might have led to extravagant terms for the accommodation rendered, and Scott considered that he had already offered liberal compensation.

He communicated to the earl the result of his mission.

"Do you think we shall get decent fare?" the earl inquired.

"I think so, but we may have to rough

it a little. It won't be equal to our hotel."

"Oh, well, it will be an adventure. I have roughed it before."

"I thought earls always fared luxuriously," said Scott, smiling.

"Earls as well as other men are subject to circumstances, and can rough it, if necessary. Some time I will tell you how I fared in Italy last winter. I confess that my appetite has been sharpened, and I am exceedingly hungry."

"So am I. We are to have bacon and eggs. I hope you have no prejudice against such a dish."

"No, it is a favorite with me. My only apprehension is, that they won't have enough to satisfy me."

In the barn the visitors found stalls for two horses, both of them unoccupied. They unharnessed their horse, or rather Scott did, for the earl, who had always had this work done for him, seemed awkward and inexperienced.

"I am sorry to put all the work upon you, Scott," he said.

"Never mind. It is no trouble."

"I suppose I ought to be ashamed of my awkwardness."

"I can easily understand that you never had to do it. In England father for a time kept a horse, and I had the care of him."

When the horse was safely stalled, Scott and the earl came out into the yard.

"Shall we go into the house?" asked Scott.

"No, we might be in the way. Here is a fence rail. We can sit upon that."

"You are making yourself very democratic," Scott said.

"Why should I not be?"

"Our new acquaintance, Mr. Alderman Burton, would be surprised to see you sitting on a fence rail."

"I shouldn't do it before him. I should keep up my dignity, or he might be shocked."

"What do you think he asked me last evening when you were out of the room?"

"What was it?"

"He asked me if you ever dined with the queen?"

"What did you answer?"

"Only when you were invited."

"Quite correct. As a matter of fact I don't think I ever was honored by such an invitation, or, as we consider it, a command."

"He also asked me to inquire of you whether the queen wore her crown at the dinner table."

"Poor old lady! I should pity her if she were obliged to do so."

Half an hour later the woman came to the door, and looking towards them called out, "Supper's ready."

"And so am I," said the earl, in a low voice. "I hope our hostess has made a liberal provision for us."

On entering the kitchen where the table was spread, they found she had done so. A dozen eggs, flanked by several slices of bacon, were on a dish in the center, and there was an ample supply of butter and corn bread.

An expression of profound satisfaction lit up the faces of the two travelers.

"Thank you, madam, for kindly complying with our request. We appreciate it the more, because we know you do not keep a hotel."

"I hope you'll like it," replied the woman. "I misremember what the boy said your name was."

"Mr. Grant," said Scott.

"Is he your brother?"

"No; my name is Walton."

"Be you in any business, Mr. Grant?" asked the woman, who began to show curiosity.

"No, madam, not at present. I am an Englishman. Possibly my friend and I might buy out a store in Buffalo."

Scott could scarcely forbear smiling. It seemed a great joke to him to think of going into a business partnership with an earl.

They ate supper with evident enjoyment. They had about concluded it when a heavy step was heard outside.

"That is my man," said the woman nervously.

Scott and the earl looked up with curiosity to see him enter.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS CHEER.

The wintry winds are blowing,
The wintry sky's a-snowing;
Troll we the song
Through the dull night long,
With merry voices flowing.
No cold distinction fear;
Let rich and poor be here,
To share our Christmas cheer!

R. C. Cox.

A LOST IDENTITY.*

By Matthew White, Jr.,

Author of "Lloyd Abbott's Friend," "The Young Editor," etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH I AM REDUCED TO SORE STRAITS.

THERE was such a light of hope in the boy's eyes as they looked up at me that I had not the heart to rush off and leave them to fill again. At any rate, hearing somebody else's woes would make me forget mine for a time at least.

"Now tell me your troubles, my boy," I said, putting my arm across his shoulder and walking slowly off down the street.

"There's lots of trouble," he replied. "Martie—he's my brother—he's been sick, but now he's getting better, and he's hungry, and there isn't anything for him to eat. I've been tending him, so I hadn't a chance to go out and sell any papers."

"Where do you live?" I inquired.

"In a room down Thirty First Street. Father died there about a month ago, and paid the rent a long time ahead. So we got along pretty well till Martie took sick."

"Will twenty five cents be any good to you?" I asked. "I'm awfully poor myself, or I'd give you more."

"Why, yes; that will buy oranges and some tea, and a loaf of bread."

I was repaid for all the self denial the giving up of the quarter cost me, by the light of relief that came into the face of the little fellow as he took the coin.

"You don't think I'm fooling you, do you?" he exclaimed suddenly, just as he was about to say, "Thank you."

"No, of course I don't," I told him.

"But won't you come to the room anyhow?" he went on. "Martie will want to see you when I tell him what you've done for us."

"Isn't there anybody to look out for you?" I wanted to know.

"No. I'm eleven and Martie's nine, and I'm growing fast."

"You're not city boys, are you?" was my next question. "You don't talk as if you were."

"No; we lived down in Georgia, and after mamma died papa brought us up here. Then the firm failed where he worked, and he couldn't get another place. Then he took the fever."

Here he halted at the door of a grocery store.

"Won't you come in and pick out the oranges for Martie?" he said. "You can tell the good ones better than I can."

So I went in with him, then accompanied him to the bakery, and finally up to their room.

Martie was a thin pallid little fellow, looking very much like his older brother, and evidently very much dependent on him. He fairly clapped his hands when he saw the oranges, and when Jack—that was the older boy's name—told him that I had bought all the things for him, he said that I must be the fairy prince he had been dreaming about.

"There's not much of the prince about me, Martie," I replied. "This is all the money I've got in the world, and no prospect at present of getting any more."

I put my hand in my pocket and drew out the few dollars I had left over from my salary, plus the three seventy five I had received for the watch.

"And after tonight I won't have any home," I added.

Martie and Jack opened their eyes wide in astonishment.

"But how can you be poor?" Jack exclaimed. "You got all these things for Martie."

"Why, because I had a good dinner tonight," I answered, "and am sure of a breakfast, and with some money in my pocket, I didn't want to feel that you were going hungry."

"Come here a minute, Jack," said Martie, beckoning to his brother.

They whispered together a minute or two, and then Jack said:

"If you haven't got any other place to go tomorrow, won't you come here and stay with us? There's a sofa—I didn't pawn it because it was too heavy for me to carry. I can sleep on that and you can have the bed with Martie."

"Yes, do come, won't you?" chimed in Martie.

I thanked them and said I would think about it, and then I shook them both by the hand and went away.

And as I walked back to Mrs. Marvin's

*The first 27 chapters of this story appeared in the September, October, and November issues of THE ARGOSY, which will be forwarded to any address on receipt of 30 cents.

I did think about the invitation those two little fellows had given me.

Absurd as the idea of accepting it seemed, what other refuge for me would there be after I had paid my board on the morrow? For I had no intention of staying on at Mrs. Marvin's, trusting to luck that I might have the money to pay her by the end of the week.

If the worst came to the worst, I could go to Martie and Jack's, and earn my board by selling papers as Jack did.

I must decide the first thing in the morning what I was going to do, and when morning came and I paid Mrs. Marvin in full, leaving me little more than a dollar over, I could think of no other place to send my trunk than the home of the two little Southern boys.

And yet, when the final moment arrived and the expressman came back up the front stoop to remind me that I hadn't told him where the trunk was going, I hesitated. For a very good reason, too.

I didn't know what Martie and Jack's last name was. It seemed absurd to consign a piece of baggage to a house occupied by so many people without giving the name of the consignee.

While I was turning the matter over in my mind, Mrs. Marvin came out on the stoop. She was exceedingly pleasant.

"I am very sorry to have you go, Mr. Bucksworth," she said. "I had hoped you could stay with us all winter."

I had, too—ardently. But I didn't tell her that. I simply replied in as dignified a tone as I could assume that I found it necessary to change my plans.

"Good by, then," she went on, putting out her hand. "When you see Miss Bucksworth and her mother, remember me kindly to them."

All this while the expressman stood waiting for his orders, and I was trying to decide what ones to give him, with my heart like lead as I thought of the future which was so black for me on this bright autumn morning.

Mrs. Marvin had gone back into the house and now the expressman cried out:

"Where do you want me to take that trunk, young fellow? I can't wait here all day."

And now I couldn't possibly have the trunk sent to Martie and Jack's. I had forgotten the number, if, indeed, I had ever known it. I could go to the house, but could not locate it for some one else.

"Yes, in a minute," I replied to the man's reminder, conscious that I was growing red with a sense of the embarrassment of my position.

The expressman gave a short little laugh.

"Look here, young feller, I've struck your kind before. I'll tell you what I'll do: take your trunk on storage till you decide just where you want to go and charge you only twenty five cents a month for it. That's fair enough, ain't it?"

I suppose poverty is honorable, but I felt humiliated before this man, who had penetrated the secret of my hesitation, and yet his proposition came to me like an inspiration. It would gain me time at any rate, and take me off the Marvin stoop.

"All right," I told him. "Where's your place?"

He gave me the address and a receipt for my trunk. Then he drove off with it and I walked down the steps of the house that had been my home, wondering if I would ever have another.

From habit I turned in the direction of Sixth Avenue. A wanderer in the streets! That's what I was.

How long would I have the strength to wander, and what should I do then? What should I do when night came any way? The little money I had left it seemed reckless extravagance to spend on lodging when every penny was needed to sustain life.

I thought of Andy Mullins. Perhaps if I should call on him his father might have something for me to do. And yet I hated dreadfully to go there now. It seemed like begging.

But I must go somewhere. The Mullins lived a good distance up town. Yet I couldn't afford to ride. Besides, it wouldn't be necessary for me to come back. I had no abiding place now. I was as well off—or rather as badly—in one part of the city as another.

So I set out and had got half way before I realized that Andy would probably be at work somewhere. The fact that I had met him in a bank was pretty strong evidence that he had left school. But I didn't know where he was employed, so I determined to keep on and find out.

Then as I walked along, the thought occurred to me that possibly if I saw Mrs. Mullins she might be able to tell me whether there was any chance of my getting a place with her husband.

I knew I should hate to do this, too, but then I had reached a point where I must leave no stone unturned. It had come to be a matter of living or dying, the way I looked at it.

I arrived at the Mullins apartment in due course. No, Andy was not at home, but Mrs. Mullins was. I sent in my name, and presently the servant came back, looking rather frightened.

"Misses doesn't care to receive play actors," she said. Then she opened the front door for me.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHICH PROVES HOW TRUE IT IS THAT
MISERY LOVES COMPANY.

If that servant had come out and struck me in the face I couldn't have been more amazed than I was at the message she brought. But there was nothing for me to do but go.

I did think of saying that I wasn't an actor any longer, but that looked too much like begging for an audience. I just walked out, telling myself that another avenue to employment was now closed to me.

As I sauntered along, not knowing nor caring where I went, I wondered how Mrs. Mullins knew I had been on the stage. I decided that probably Andy had been to the theater and seen me. I felt sure, though, that he would not share his mother's sentiments concerning the occupation. Still, that did not signify. I must now consider the whole family crossed off my books.

Passing a paper stand, I expended two cents on a copy of the *World* and five more on car fare to the address of an advertiser who wanted a smart boy to "tend store," only to find that this lucky individual had been selected hours before.

I was now in the down town region again. Broadway was thronged with busy men and women, all apparently with an object in life. I did not even see a tramp or a beggar, so I was forced to the conclusion that I was the most forlorn creature out that morning.

Where I was going I could not have told. Presently I was sensible that so much exercise was beginning to make me hungry, and I tried to think where I could find a place to sit down. It would never do for one in my circumstances to begin to grow hungry before twelve o'clock.

Passing the Fifth Avenue Hotel, I recalled my interview there with Rupert, and thought that there could be no objections to my going in and sitting a while in the corridor. As yet my clothes were sufficiently respectable to prevent my being taken for a vagabond.

Sitting there on one of the blue plush settees, with the panorama of Madison Square at my right, and a constant passing back and forth in front of me of men whose names were known all over the country, it was hard to realize that I was so very far removed from the life and spirit of it all.

Then my mind strayed to Rupert and the strange story he had told me of Arthur Weston, the fellow I resembled.

"I suppose that photograph is ready by this time," I told myself. "I'd like to see one, but I'm not in exactly the condition to waste two cents in postage stamps."

"Aha, well met, my friend," a cordial voice broke in on my gloomy reflections, and a soft hand grasped mine. I looked up, and saw Fred Brythwaite before me. He was sober this time, and dressed in the latest style, with a crook cane, silk hat, long Prince Albert, and pointed patent leather shoes.

"How do you do?" I said, as he sat down beside me. "I am glad to see that you are once more in the cast of 'Up to Date.'"

"That must have been a week ago," he replied lightly. "I got full again, and was lounced for good and all. But such is life. Up today and down tomorrow. Today I consider one of my 'up' days from the fact that I have met you. My exchequer is rather low, so the invitation to that dinner you promised me will come in very handy."

I could actually feel myself turning pale at this suggestion. Then the utter absurdity of the thing came over me, and I laughed nervously.

"My dear Mr. Brythwaite," I replied, "my exchequer, I venture to say, is lower than yours."

"Done," he interposed quickly. "I'll take you up on that. I'll bet you the dinner in question that I'm worse off than you are. Come turn your pockets inside out."

I complied readily enough. One dollar and forty three cents I panned out. He had two fifty.

"Honest Injun, Bucksworth," he said, "is that all you've got?"

"Every cent," I answered. "I was sitting here because I was afraid too much exercise might make me hungry."

I tried to smile as I said this, but I must have made a poor attempt at it, for he looked at me seriously and laid his hand on my arm as he said:

"My dear boy, I'm really sorry for you. You see I can be, because I know what it is to be there myself. Now I'll stick to my word and take you out to dinner. It won't be to Delmonico's though."

"Oh, don't mind about that," I protested. "I mean about taking me any place. After all, you're not much better off than I am."

"Immeasurably so, my boy," he responded, daintily flicking a bit of straw from his soft melton coat sleeve. "I am accustomed to this sort of thing, and you, I take it, are not."

"Indeed I'm not," I assured him. "I'm sure I don't know what's going to become of me."

"Oh, don't give up the ship. I'll tell you what. Let's pool our issues for a while. I need somebody to keep me straight, somebody to cheer me up. My old friends all cross over to the other side of the street when they see me coming, afraid I'm going to strike them for a loan. You, now, have nothing to fear, because you know that I know that you're as hard up as I am myself. What do you say; is it a partnership?"

And he held out his hand.

"It must be a partnership then without any capital," I repeated as I took it, trying to speak in his own humor.

"Good. Where are you living?"

"Nowhere. I left my boarding house this morning."

"Now, that's a little awkward. I've had a little scrap with the madam myself. In fact, she has taken more of a fancy to my

"things than to myself, and retained my trunk when she let me go."

"I haven't my trunk either," and I told him how I had been obliged to send it on storage.

"Shake again, chum," exclaimed Brythwaite. "We'll make a better team than I thought. Now let's see how we can arrange this sleeping business. Haven't you any friends we can put up with for the first night, till we have time to turn around and find out where we're at?"

"No, I haven't," I hastened to assure him, glad for the moment that this was the case.

I didn't want to answer for this fellow's behavior to any friends of mine.

"Well, that's too bad. But we won't cross a bridge till we come to it. I tell you what, it's close on to twelve now. We'll run in to the Grand and play a couple of games of pool. That will bring us to lunch time."

"But we'll have to pay something for the use of the tables," I objected.

"Cert; that will keep up our character. If any friends happen along they'll think we must be in funds or we wouldn't waste what little money we had that way. Philosophy, my boy, every time."

I was horribly lonesome, and as long as we weren't going to gamble, I thought there would be no harm in acting on his suggestion. But he was obliged to teach me how to play, and I was so stupid at learning—my mind being too intent on my own deplorable prospects—that he was glad to quit at the end of the first game.

"Come, let's have a drink, Jack," he said, as he put up his cue.

I had been afraid this was coming.

"No, Mr. Brythwaite," I said, "I won't drink with you, and I imagine from what you said a little while ago that you want me to keep you from taking one if I can."

"You're right, my boy. I'm a queer one about drink. I'm in a better humor sober than drunk. Besides I ought to save the few pennies I've got for eatables. I don't see how I'm to get through dinner without wine though. I'll tell you what: we'll make it lunch, when it won't seem so necessary. Then you can order the dinner tonight, and of course if you don't choose to include claret, I can't kick. Now where shall we go?"

After some discussion of various places, we finally settled on a hotel where an order for one was enough for two. We didn't have very much, but what we had was good. I had no idea a person in my situation could enjoy food so much. I suppose that was because I had company.

While we were eating, Brythwaite told me a little of his history. It seemed he came from a New England family, of great respectability, who had thrown him over completely when he went on the stage. He had done very well for a time, but what success he had turned his head, and

he began to drink more than was good for him.

"I can't begin to tell you the number of places I've queered myself at, Jack," he said. "Nice families, all of them, too, friends of the pater's, who stuck by me till I went to see them when I was—well, under the weather. So now I haven't a soul to turn to, which reminds me that even with the putting together of our two heads, we haven't yet hatched up a place to shelter us for the night."

Nor had we by the time evening arrived. We had spent the afternoon walking up and down the principal avenues, stopping in at the various stores to inquire whether help was wanted, meeting always with the same response.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN WHICH THE ELEVATED ROAD PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART.

I NEVER saw a man like Brythwaite. He appeared not to worry in the least about our prospects.

"Something's sure to turn up," he kept saying. "It isn't at all likely we shall die of starvation in the streets."

You would not have thought we were in any danger of this if you had seen the dinner he picked out for me to order that night. Raw oysters, chicken soup, roast beef, celery, and salad, I had just twenty cents left when the check was paid.

"That's all right, Jack," he protested. "We can go longer without eating on a full stomach, so it's six by one, half a dozen by the other."

"But what are we going to do for breakfast?" I inquired.

"We may not live till breakfast time, my boy," he replied airily. "Think, then, how sorry we should be that we did not make a royal dinner."

There was no use in arguing with such a fellow. He actually seemed to have no capacity for worrying. I felt that it was reckless to expend all my money in this way, but then the comradeship was worth a good deal to me. Besides, it was only hastening the crisis by about twenty four hours.

"Now we'll go to the theater," he said, as we rose from the table.

"To the theater!" I ejaculated, in amazement. "What on?"

"On this," and he waved on high one of his visiting cards. "It won't cost us anything."

And it didn't. We spent the evening at one of the Broadway houses, where a rattling comedy was on the boards, and I guess we laughed as heartily as any of the spectators who knew where they were going to sleep that night and that they were certain of their breakfast.

I seemed to have imbibed some of the reckless spirit of my companion. Perhaps, though, the fact that we were both well

dressed had something to do with our inability to realize to the full our serious condition.

But when the play was over, I was terribly sleepy, and the thought that there was no place for me to sleep began to be a very depressing one.

"I suppose," remarked Brythwaite, as we started along with the crowd on Broadway, "we might scare up enough small change between us to go to one of the cheap lodging houses, but, br-r-r, I'd rather walk the streets all night, wouldn't you, matey?"

"Yes, if I could keep awake."

I put my arm through his and dragged heavily upon it. You must remember I had done a deal of walking that day.

"I have it!" he exclaimed after we had walked till I was ready to drop. "Come over to the Elevated road."

"Why, where are we going?" I asked.

"Nowhere in particular. Let me see, you get the longest ride on Sixth Avenue. We'll try that with an up train."

"Oh, you mean to go to sleep on the cars! But the guard will wake you up at the end of the road, won't he, and make you get out?"

"Yes, and then we can cross to the other side and come down again. It will only cost five cents each."

"But when we get to the Battery we shall have to do the same thing over again," I objected, "and keeping that up all night will be as expensive as hiring a room."

"Oh, but I don't expect to go to the Battery. You wait and you'll see a trick worth two of that."

I was curious, but too sleepy to ask questions then. We boarded a train at the Twenty Eighth Street station, and before we reached Thirty Third I was fast asleep, with Brythwaite's shoulder for a pillow.

I knew nothing more till I found him gently shaking me, with the announcement that we had reached the Harlem River and must change cars.

"Would you mind walking about a bit?" he added. "It's a little early yet to put my scheme into effect. Come, we'll go up on the viaduct."

I was pretty sleepy still, but I pulled myself together, and we went up the steps to the slanting, bridge-like roadway that leads down from Washington Heights to the Harlem.

I had never been up here before, and the novelty of the experience freshened me up a little. Slowly Brythwaite and I strolled along toward the upper end of the structure, ascended the hill, and then kept on down toward the Hudson.

We soon found ourselves passing a large cemetery, and Brythwaite stopped talking for a few minutes. Then he began in an altogether different tone:

"I'm awfully sorry for you, Jack. You

are too young and have too good a character to be knocking about the world this way. Blame me, if I haven't taken a fancy to you, just because you were willing to take up with a wreck like me. I wish I could do something for you. But I've determined on one thing: I won't see you go hungry if I have to pawn the coat off my back or beg from door to door."

I was touched by this expression of friendship, which I knew to be genuine. In return I told Brythwaite my story, in which he seemed much interested.

"You've got something to look forward to, Jack," he said. "We must contrive that you don't go to the dogs along with me. Who knows but you're a young millionaire who's been stolen in his babyhood, gypsy fashion?"

"I don't see any chance of that," I rejoined. "I simply changed places with the boy who is now Ward Falconer, and his parents are dead."

"But are you sure that you simply changed places with this fellow?" Brythwaite persisted. "His eyes proved that he was a Falconer, but what was there about you to prove that you were a Bucks-worth?"

"Why, how could there be any doubt?" I replied. "If he turned out to be me, it naturally followed that I was he."

"Not at all," Brythwaite insisted. "There may have been other babies lost in that fire beside you two. This Falconer's identity is proved because of his eyes. Yours was not, because there was no clue to connect you with any one."

Was that true? Was there not a clue that connected me with some one? But no, it was ridiculous. There could be no possibility of such a thing as entered my mind. It would be absurd to speak of it.

"I tell you what you'd better do, Jack," Brythwaite went on. "Write out to that hotel in Omaha and find out all you can about the people who were in the hotel at the time of the fire."

"But where will I be by the time the answer comes back?" I returned dismally.

"Oh, don't worry about that. I'll see that you pull through somehow, and won't ask a cent till you come into your inheritance."

"You talk as if you actually knew that I belonged to rich people. It's a good deal more likely that my family, whoever they were, were as poor as church mice."

"I'll risk that. If I keep the life in you till you come into your own, will you agree to do something for me when you have the power?"

"Of course I will, my dear fellow," I answered, adding: "Are we going to walk clear down this hill?"

"No; we'll only have it to climb up again. Come, we might as well turn around. We can walk back to the station slowly."

I now began to grow sleepy once more.

and hung on to my companion heavily on the way down the viaduct. What an oddly assorted pair we were, I told myself, as I recalled the day he had asked me to treat him.

But he was a good fellow at heart, who had been led astray by bad influences. If there was anything in what he said about my future, I determined to do—but here I broke off in my meditations with a half laugh. It seemed preposterous for a fellow without a roof to shelter him, to speculate on what he would do for the friend who was to help him into his own.

Ten cents of our precious money went to pay for tickets, and when we entered the rear car, Brythwaite said to the guard: "Wake us up at One Hundred and Fourth Street please."

"What's that for, Brythwaite," I whispered. "That won't give us any sort of nap."

"That's all right," he assured me. "Just you wait."

I settled myself comfortably, and in no time at all it seemed to me I was being shaken and told to hurry out.

"That confounded guard let us sleep past a station," Brythwaite muttered. "This is Ninety Third. That's because I didn't tip him, I suppose. How long before the next train?"

This last was addressed to the ticket chopper.

"Fifteen minutes after one o'clock," answered that individual.

"We'll have to go into the gentlemen's room and wait then," Brythwaite returned in a tone of assumed vexation. "That stupid guard has got us out at the wrong station."

"But the next train won't carry us up to One Hundred and Fourth Street," I reminded my companion when we were out of hearing of the man at the box.

"Of course it won't, but it will take us to—let me see—Fifty Third Street. There we can have another quarter of an hour's nap. Now start in. Time's precious."

I thought I began to understand his plan, but I was too sleepy to discuss it. I dropped off in a minute again, and it seemed scarcely a moment before I was roused once more.

Brythwaite seemed to be in great good humor.

"The fellow forgot to wake us for the first train," he whispered, "so we've had half an hour's snooze."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH A GREAT POSSIBILITY IS SUGGESTED TO ME.

I SHALL never forget that night, spent on the Elevated road. In the manner I have described in the last chapter we worked our way, from station to station, until, when we reached South Ferry, day was beginning to break.

Of course the rest thus obtained was a much broken one, but still it was an improvement on not sleeping at all.

"Great idea, isn't it?" remarked Brythwaite, as we walked along the sea wall at the Battery to stretch our legs. "And now for breakfast. Let's take account of stock. How much have you got, or rather how little?"

Ten cents was all I could pan out. Brythwaite had five.

"We can get coffee and bread for that," he said. "Come on; with breakfast aboard we'll be ready to take a brighter outlook on life."

We adjourned to a restaurant where they furnished neither tablecloths nor napkins, and lingered so long over our meager repast that the waiter began to eye us suspiciously. So we got up and went out into the street without a cent in our pockets.

As I looked at Brythwaite, resplendent in his good clothes, I could scarcely realize this fact. If we were tramps, we were as yet quite respectable ones.

Where we were going, neither of us could have told. Mechanically we started up Broadway.

"We might stop at one of the newspaper offices," Brythwaite suggested presently, "and look over the advertisements in the files."

"See there," I exclaimed at this instant, nodding in the direction of a handsome truck, drawn by two sturdy horses, which was just passing us.

On its side was painted

WESTON SUGAR REFINERY.

"What is it?" asked Brythwaite.

"Why, I had quite a queer adventure with a man employed by this Weston," I replied, adding with a sigh: "The money he offered me for what I did would come in handy now."

"Somebody owe you money that you haven't collected?" cried my companion, grasping me by the coat sleeve.

"Well, I don't know as you can say they actually owe it to me. I refused to take it when it was offered. It's a queer story all around."

"Tell it then by all means. It may mean dinner, supper, and a bed to us."

"I guess not," I rejoined mournfully. "These people live in Mamaroneck and—where's our car fare to come from?"

"What's the matter with walking? But tell your story first."

Thereupon I told about my falling in with the man Rupert on Twenty Third Street, the strange request he had made of me, and my visit to the elegant home up in Westchester County.

Brythwaite caught hold of my arm as I proceeded, and bent his head close to mine so as not to miss a word.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" he demanded, when I had finished.

"Because I didn't happen to think of it."

It had no regular connection with my New York experiences; was only an incident, and—

"Only an incident!" broke in Brythwaite. "Why, my dear boy, did you never think that your resemblance to this Arthur Weston was not chance? Did it never dawn on you that here was to be discovered the secret of your parentage? Did—"

"Yes; I thought of all that last night," I interposed, "when you were asking me if there was no clue connecting me with somebody else. But I knew it was no use to think any more about it, because this Rupert told me that Arthur was the only child."

"Of course he thinks so," Brythwaite rejoined. "But you said he was only a sort of upper servant. You don't suppose the old man confided to him all the mysteries of the family, do you?"

"I never thought of it in that way," I admitted, my heart beginning to beat fast. "Do you suppose there is anything in this resemblance beyond a mere coincidence?"

"Of course I suppose there is. You ought to look into it at once. You say this man Rupert is at the country place in Mamaroneck?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll go there at once. That will give us one object in life that will keep us busy all day. We're tramps in finances; now we'll be tramps in fact, and take to the road. It's a fine, cool day for walking."

"It's a pretty good distance up there," I replied. "It takes an hour by train."

"We'll take it by easy stages, then, and get there by supper time. Then this Rupert will keep us all night. You say he is under obligations to you, and I am a friend of yours, bound to see you through on this deal."

What if it proved true after all! I squared my shoulders and struck an easy, swinging gait, in which Brythwaite joined me, and which brought us to Central Park in an hour and a quarter.

Here we sat down on a bench to rest for ten minutes, then up and on again to the Harlem River. I was pretty tired by the time we reached the Madison Avenue bridge.

"I know it's a tough pull, youngster," Fred said (he had asked me to drop the longer name), "but think of it as the last straw that *isn't* going to break the camel's back. We'll soon be in the country, then we can rest along the road, and get our dinner at some farm house. I'll fix that for you."

It *was* pleasant to get out in the country again. I was reminded of Shoreham, and forgot for a while that I had made such a dismal failure of striking out for myself.

But *had* I made a failure of it? What if I turned out to be a Weston? Would not my venturing to the city, in that case,

have been worth all the suffering it had brought me?

Cheered by these anticipations, I tried to look upon the long tramp as a sort of pleasure jaunt, a pedestrian tour that Brythwaite and I had undertaken for the fun of it.

But my imagination had to work very hard to keep up this illusion as noontime drew near, and my appetite began to get an edge on it.

"How are we going to get anything to eat?" I asked my fellow tramp.

"Leave that to me," he answered, and at the next lane we came to he turned in, I following, of course.

Just before we reached the farm house he stopped, and taking out his silk handkerchief, flicked the dust from his patent leather shoes.

"Make yourself look as slick as possible, chum," he told me. "I am going to show you an example of a man getting his dinner on his looks."

We had timed our arrival well, for just as he spoke a young girl came to the door, and raising a horn to her lips, blew a blast that echoed shrilly down the meadows that stretched away from the house.

Brythwaite stepped forward and lifting his hat, said in his winning voice:

"I beg pardon, but we do not know where to find a hotel, and my friend has turned suddenly faint. If you could let us have a glass of milk and a bit of bread, it would place us under deep obligations."

The girl looked at him wonderingly for an instant, and then turned around and called, "Ma."

She stepped back and we could hear her talking to some one in the kitchen. The next instant a shrill voice cried out:

"Now, Hetty, we feed no more tramps. I've told you that time and time again."

"But, ma, these ain't tramps," the girl replied. "Just come out and look at them."

A woman, her face flushed from bending over the cook stove, poked her head out of the door. Brythwaite promptly took off his hat again, and repeated his request.

"Certainly, come right in and set up to the table," she said at once. "Dinner's jest ready. Hetty, fly round and get two chairs out of the settin' room. I hope you don't mind eatin' in the kitchen. I know you ain't used to it, but then it's mighty convenient when you do your own work. Set right down and welcome."

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH A THEORY PROVES UNTENABLE.

I COULD not but look at Brythwaite and wonder at his presence of mind—nerve, he called it himself—in sitting there at that farm house table, chatting lightly of the weather, the condition of the crops, the theaters, and the Westons. To hear him talk, one would think that we had decided

to walk from the city to Mamaroneck, as a new way of passing the time, or for the sake of a unique experience, and were awaited at the palatial home of the sugar refiner as honored guests.

"And are you really going to walk all the way there?" Hetty asked, as she passed me the second plate of apple pie her mother had insisted on giving me.

"Oh yes," I answered. "We are more than half way there now."

"But you may get faint again," the young girl went on.

I was about to protest that I hadn't been faint at all yet, when Brythwaite touched me with his foot under the table. Then I recalled what he had said about me in asking for the milk, and answered that I had not slept well the night before, but felt much better after the hearty dinner they had given me.

"I know it is not polite to eat and run," Brythwaite said, as we rose from the table, "but I am sure you will be busy and we ought to be—covering ground. Now how much—" and to my dismay, he thrust his hand into his trousers' pocket.

What was he thinking of? Had he forgotten that he hadn't a cent of money?

But the farmer's wife already had her hand raised in protest.

"We couldn't think of taking any pay," she said. "If you are passing here again at dinner time, we shall be pleased to have you drop in."

"Thank you very much," and Brythwaite took his hand out of his pocket slowly, without any sign that a great weight was lifted from his mind.

"However did you manage that, Fred?" I asked, when we were once more jogging along the road.

"Just as I told you I would: on my looks. What's the use of being a presentable appearing fellow if you can't turn it to account?"

"But what if she had said the dinner was fifty cents apiece?" I suggested.

"I should have bewailed the fact that I was all out of small change. But I knew my ground. Of course I couldn't get a meal this way in the city. If I was dressed well enough not to be a tramp, they'd take me for a book agent, and the servant wouldn't let me in."

"It seems to me, though," I rejoined, "as if we'd deceived them. If—well, if I turn out to be a Weston, I'm going to drive down here and make it square with them in some way. That was a mighty good dinner."

We walked briskly for several miles after this, and I soon began to wonder just how I should state to Rupert the errand on which I had come. Then I remembered the photograph of myself I wanted to see. This would open the way nicely.

About half past three I began to tire again, and we sat down by the roadside to rest a while. The country was growing

prettier with every mile we advanced. Handsome turnouts passed us, and more than once Fred laughingly told me that the day might not be far off when I would be riding in one of these fine carriages myself.

"And if I don't ever do this," I returned, "if I find that we have come out here on a wild goose chase, what then?"

"Don't cross bridges till you get to them, my boy," was Fred's response to this. "Last night you didn't think we'd be half as cheerful this time today as we are. Who knows what tomorrow will bring forth?"

It was nearly sunset when we came in sight of Mamaroneck; it seemed long after that, judging from my craving for supper.

"Great Jupiter!" ejaculated Fred, as we passed through the handsome gateway and into the perfectly kept grounds of the Weston place, "if you do turn out to be Percy or Herbert or Claud Weston, you *will* be a swell, now, won't you? I hope not so much of a one, though, but you will condescend to notice the sharers of your adversity."

"Of course I shan't, old fellow," I returned. "But we don't want to do any counting of unhatched chickens."

We walked in under the *porte cochère*, and I pressed the electric button beside the front door. I was strangely free from excitement. Now that I was on the spot, it seemed to me that there was absolutely nothing in Brythwaite's theory.

Rupert had told me flatly that Arthur was the only child. What more was there to say?

Still we were no worse off here than in New York; probably a little better.

A man in livery opened the door for us. I was a little disconcerted at this. When I had been there before, everything was very informal. I felt some constraint about asking simply for "Rupert."

However, there was nothing else to do.

"Can I see Rupert for a few minutes?" I inquired.

The flunkie stared at me as though he thought I ought to put that question at the kitchen door.

"He isn't here," he answered then.

My hopes dropped.

"Where is he?" I went on.

The man hesitated an instant. "Oh, he is gone off on a business trip for Mr. Weston," he said.

I started to turn away when Fred broke in with:

"Mr. Weston is home, then?"

"Yes, sir," replied the footman.

This was news to me, but I failed to see how I could turn it to account. Not so Fred.

"Mr. Weston is the person we wish to see, then," he added.

"But nobody is allowed to see him. He's very ill, sir."

"Then let us see his doctor," continued Fred, not to be put off. "It is a matter of

the greatest importance to Mr. Weston, and may affect his health materially."

Fred's manner was firm, yet courteous. We had made ourselves as presentable as we could before entering the grounds. Brythwaite certainly looked as though he had stepped out of a Fifth Avenue club.

"Will you take seats in here?" and the man held aside a plush portière.

We sat down to wait, on a satin divan.

"What are you going to do, Fred?" I whispered.

"Apply to headquarters," he said. "Perhaps it is as well that this Rupert is away. He might only ward you off."

"But Mr. Weston is an imbecile," I objected.

"Perhaps the sight of you will cure him. Hush, here comes the doctor. Let me manage this thing for you."

A grave looking man in spectacles entered the room, which was lighted by only one electric bulb. The footman had not thought it necessary to turn on any more.

"You wished to see me?" the physician said interrogatively, peering curiously at us both.

I wondered what he would have thought had he known our financial condition.

"Yes," answered Fred, "on a matter of extreme importance. May I inquire, sir, whether you are Mr. Weston's family physician, one who has been intrusted with—well, with secrets of his history."

The doctor cleared his throat before replying.

"This is a very singular question, Mr.—"

"Brythwaite, Mr. Brythwaite, from New York," Fred interposed, with the ease of a millionaire. "I know it is a singular question; so is the business on which we have come. Jack," turning to me, "won't you please stand so that the light will fall on your face?"

Mutely I obeyed and Fred went on, while the doctor seemed too astounded to interrupt, as I thought he might do.

"Now then," Fred went on, "if you know Mr. Arthur Weston"—here he dropped his voice, as though speaking of the dead—"you must see a startling resemblance between him and this young man."

He paused and smiled triumphantly at me as he noted the look of astonishment on the doctor's face. Then he turned to the latter and went on rapidly:

"Mr. Weston has been married twice. He lived in the West with his first wife, who perished, along with their child, as was supposed, in a hotel fire in Omaha. That child did not perish, but was saved and brought up by a family living at the hotel at the time. This is the boy. Does not his similarity to Arthur prove it?"

The physician looked at me long and earnestly.

"How do you know all this?" he said then, turning to Fred.

As a matter of fact, it was all theory with Brythwaite. I wondered what he would say. But he seemed not in the least phased.

"Ask Mr. Weston if it is not true," he replied.

The doctor turned quickly to me.

"How old are you, young man?" he asked.

"Seventeen."

"Arthur is nineteen," was the prompt response. "I think that disposes effectually of your fine theory, Mr. Brythwaite."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH VARIOUS PEOPLE REAPPEAR.

JUST as the doctor spoke I recollected myself that Arthur Weston was older than I, and realized that of course this utterly demolished Brythwaite's theory. Why had he not told me what he was going to claim? I might have saved him this humiliation.

But he did not look humiliated.

"I did not profess to *know* any of these facts," he said calmly. "We are all in the dark as to actualities; can only feel our way toward possibilities. The fact of the marked resemblance between the two young men still remains unshaken."

"But Mr. Weston had only one child, I tell you," the physician declared.

"Had we not better let Mr. Weston see this young man?" Fred responded.

"But he is an imbecile," rejoined the doctor. "Of what avail would an interview with him be?"

"It can at least do no harm," Fred persisted. "It may restore his reason; who knows?"

"But who is this young man? Where does he come from? Why has he not made himself known before?"

"Because," Fred responded, "he did not realize the important bearing his resemblance to Mr. Weston's son might have on his fortune till I called his attention to it. Why, that resemblance is so marked that he was asked to sit for the portrait of Mr. Arthur."

The doctor hesitated a moment longer, then he exclaimed:

"Well, as you say, it can do no harm. Come."

He led the way out into the hall, up a superb staircase and through a corridor hung with handsome tapestries and suits of armor. Entering a long room at the further end of this, we found ourselves in the presence of a man, not old, and with a kind, though sad face, and whose resemblance to myself I saw at once.

"Mr. Weston," said the physician, without further introduction, "do you know this young man?"

He took me by the arm and led me to the side of the man whom some instinct told me at once was my father.

One look and the light of reason seemed to come into the dull eyes in a flash.

"Archie, my son?" he exclaimed and folded me in his arms.

I suppose it would be according to precedent for me to put a row of stars here, but then that wouldn't be satisfactory to the reader, who always wants to know what people did next.

What we did next was to restore my father to consciousness, for he had promptly fainted after his recognition of me. Some may think that Dr. Hinward was imprudent to bring me forward without any preparation, but he was acting on a theory which proved to be a correct one.

The sudden shock restored the clouded reason, and when my father opened his eyes again, it was as a perfectly sane man.

"I had given you up for dead, my son," he said, stroking my hair as though I were a little boy.

And then he explained how Arthur's mother had died at his birth and how he had married again, only to lose wife and child, as he supposed, in that hotel fire in Omaha. He had been severely injured himself, and only recovered after many weeks of insensibility.

It was my turn to faint now, not from shock, but from hunger and exhaustion. Then Fred, as he afterwards told me, made a clean breast of it, and told to what straits we had been reduced.

And such a dinner as was brought up to me on a silver tray in the pink tinted room to which I had been carried!

"How did you come to know who I was so quickly, father?" I asked a little later. "I was a tiny baby when you saw me last."

"It was your resemblance to Arthur," was the reply. "You both look like me."

He remembered everything distinctly now. He had returned from Europe very unexpectedly, passing that photograph on the way.

Rupert, it seemed, had gone to Albany to try to influence the governor to pardon out Arthur, that he might return home and perhaps prolong his father's life.

There was so much to talk about that it was nearly midnight when we got to bed. They gave Brythwaite a room adjoining mine. I told father all he had done for me, and he promised to provide for him—make him private secretary, which was just what Fred would like.

"Don't fear for me, Jack," he said (calling me by the old name for the last time). "I've a pretty strong will of my own when I once make up my mind. I shall never be the worse for liquor again," and he gave me his hand on it.

What happy days were those that followed, shadowed only by the thought of Arthur! Father made me tell him in

detail all my experiences during those eventful weeks in the city, and took keen delight in having Rupert look up Martie and Jack, giving them a home with a big hearted woman who would look after them like a mother.

And you can imagine that I didn't lose much time in calling on the Bucksworths. And a good laugh Fleda and I had over my third change of name.

After some discussion it was decided that I should enter one of the senior classes at the Berkeley School to prepare for college, and I began my studies as soon as we moved into the town house in Fifty Seventh Street.

I was riding in the Park one afternoon when I met Roy Harkness. He joined me, and I told him my story.

"I'm just going to *make* the folks forgive you, old fellow," he said, when we parted, "and see they were wrong."

And he did, for two weeks afterwards I was invited to dine at their house.

"We were very harsh to you," Mrs. Harkness said then, "when you had done your best for Roy. Will you forgive us?"

"I am the one who needs that, Mrs. Harkness," I replied. "If it hadn't been for me—"

"No, say no more about it," and we have been the best of friends ever since.

Of course I lost no time in writing to Shoreham of all the wonderful things that had befallen me. At father's suggestion, and as delicately as I could, I hinted that I would be glad to do anything to improve the family finances as a return for the many things they had done for me. But Mr. Falconer (how queer it seems still to write that!) wrote back saying they were getting along very well.

But, notwithstanding, at Christmas father sent him, in my name, a check for five hundred dollars.

The first of January Arthur came home, pardoned out by the governor. He was awfully sad, poor boy, but we have become the closest chums. Before the month was out, however, father sent him to Europe, with Brythwaite, to stay till the excitement over his case died out.

During my next summer's vacation, father accompanied me on a visit to Shoreham. We had a splendid time. I spent the first night with Harvey Kirk, and I had so much to tell him that we talked straight through till daylight. Mabel was as charming as ever and—well, I tried to compare her with Fleda Bucksworth, but couldn't. Both girls were equally fascinating, so if any one expects the love element tacked on to the end of this story, he's doomed to disappointment. When the fellow principally concerned in the matter can't decide for himself, it is too much to expect him to satisfy the curiosity of others.

A CHRISTMAS RECKONING.

By William D. Moffat.

I.

AFTER TWO YEARS.

"WHEN is the New York Express due?"

"Not for twenty minutes."

"What's the matter?"

"She has been delayed the other side of Morven Junction."

I turned impatiently away from the ticket office, and walked out on the platform.

It was now nearly seven o'clock. There was an unusual stir about the old station. Both on the platform and within the waiting rooms people were walking briskly up and down, or standing in groups chatting gaily—all, like myself, awaiting the arrival of the evening train with its burden of Christmas home comers.

As I looked down the track through the whirling, fleecy mist, blown by the wind from the snow drifts, I thought I detected a small light away ahead. The next moment the rails began to hum.

I hurried back into the station.

"What train is this?" I asked.

"The Clermont Special," answered the agent.

The crowds pressed out of the doors. The light down the track was growing rapidly. Then the platform began to tremble, and the train rumbled in.

There was a hissing sound of escaping steam, a clanking of brakes, and a squeaking of wheels.

"Towanda!" shouted the conductor, as the passengers came hurrying out.

I stood back out of the way, watching the arrivals. For a minute there was a hubbub of greetings. Then a large portion of the crowd moved off homeward, leaving a few of us who were awaiting the belated New York Express.

The conductor of the Special passed me, swinging his lantern. He was a Towanda man, and I knew him.

"Hullo, Rogers!" I called out. "How is everything?"

"Pretty fair. Who are you expecting?"

"My father. He has been in New York for two weeks."

Rogers came nearer.

"I brought in an old Towanda chap," he said.

"Who is it?"

"Do you remember Wade—that cousin of young Terry?"

I caught my breath.

"You don't mean Tom Wade?"

"Yes, that's the chap. He used to live with the Terrys. You remember he ran away all of a sudden, a good while ago."

"And you mean to say Tom Wade came in on your train?" I asked excitedly.

"I won't swear to it, but it was a chap mighty like him. He got on at Morven Junction, and he kept his face in his coat collar and his hat down over his eyes, so it was hard to see anything of him. But there was that red scar on the side of his forehead, and—hold on, I can't wait. All aboard!"

And with a wave of his lantern, Rogers swung on the train. As he did so he turned back toward me.

"If you want to know for certain, follow the chap up. There he goes ahead there."

I looked in the direction Rogers pointed. A single figure, in a large overcoat and soft hat, was walking slowly along, keeping well in the rear of the other people.

I hurried after him at once. When I reached him he was just about to step off the end of the long platform. We were now quite alone.

"Hold on a minute!" I called out.

The figure turned quickly, and the light of the lantern on the platform fell directly on his face.

"Why, Tom Wade!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Tom Wade," he answered.

He made no motion to offer me his hand. I could not offer him mine.

"So it's really you!" was all I could think to say.

"Yes."

"What are you doing here?"

"My home is here."

"Yes, but have you forgotten everything? Don't you know the risk you run? Why have you come back?"

"Because I couldn't help it—tomorrow is Christmas, you know."

He was evading my question.

"Christmas or not," I said, "I can't understand your daring to come back. How could you do it?"

"There are some people I must see."

"But the danger of it. Don't you know that you are simply running your head into a noose?"

"I suppose there is danger. I suppose there is risk. I don't know. I've heard nothing from Towanda in so long—"

"You 'suppose' there is risk! Why,



"Why are you so anxious to go up the river?" she asked

Tom Wade, don't you know that there is a warrant for your arrest now in the hands of the police—that if you are found in town you will be thrown into jail?"

He shuddered, and instinctively drew his hat further down over his face.

"Is it as bad as that?" he asked.

"What could you expect?" I returned in surprise. "It was only two years ago that—that you disappeared. You know why. You don't suppose the bank authorities forget what your disappearance cost them, do you? Do you think that you can come back in two years, and find a welcome?"

"I will take care not to be seen."

I shook my head.

"You can't help it. Rogers, the conductor, recognized you. I have seen you—and others will as readily."

"And does every one in town know me for a thief?"

"No—but you've not yourself to thank for that. Out of respect for your uncle, Mr. Terry, and his high social standing, the matter has been kept very quiet. I only learned the whole truth by accident from my father, who is one of the bank directors—and you may be sure I think too much of the Terrys to let out the secret. But that has nothing to do with you. What difference does it make whether the town knows it or not? It is just as bad—and I think the least you can do is to stay away so that your disgrace can be kept secret. I am simply dumfounded to see you back here."

He hesitated a moment.

"I—I suppose you are right," he said bitterly.

I was touched by his tone.

"Why *did* you do it, Tom?" I said. "You had every reason to do well. The

Terrys had made a home for you when your mother died. Mr. Terry treated you as a son, and got you a place at the bank right by the side of your cousin, Rod Terry. Why couldn't you appreciate a good thing when you had it? Gratitude alone ought to have kept you from——"

"Don't say any more," he broke out. "I know how bad the whole thing is. When I went away I calculated all the consequences."

"Then why, I say, have you come back?"

"There are some people I *must* see," he repeated.

"And do you mean to stay here, knowing all the risk?"

"You say it has been kept quiet."

I could not avoid an expression of anger.

"Yes, but do you suppose you can take advantage of that? Do you think that the bank management will tolerate your presence here? The whole affair would be sure to come out—and then what? Public disgrace for you, and more unhappiness for the Terrys. See here, Tom Wade, haven't you done them enough injury already? Do you want to drag their names into——"

"No, no," he interrupted. "Goodness knows I wouldn't do anything to make them unhappy."

"Then go away at once. It is all quiet now. If you stay away it will remain so. If you show yourself here there is no knowing what will happen."

He was silent for a few seconds.

"If I *must* go, I will," he said slowly. "But I must see Uncle Richard and the others first."

"No," I answered; "you can't do that. Do you know what a shock all this has been to him? Your name is never mentioned. You know what kind of a man your uncle is. You couldn't face him. And besides it might only be the means of your betrayal."

"And Rod—tell me about him."

"He is to be married next spring. Don't you see how everything is—and what your detection would mean?"

"Rod is not married yet?" exclaimed Tom. "He became engaged just before I—I went away."

"Rod is young—and he is not well off," I answered; "but I can't talk any longer. The New York train will be in directly, and you must go, Tom. Of course it is hard, but it can't be helped. For your own sake, and for the sake of the Terrys, you simply *must* go."

"I will go—I promise that. But I must see Rod and Cousin Bertha first."

I was exasperated, and made a quick gesture of denial.

"It is too risky I tell you."

"I will be careful. Trust me, Harry; I won't let any one see me." His voice took on a pleading tone. "If I can't see Uncle

Richard, at least let me see Rod and Bertha. I *must*, Harry. Fix it for me, won't you? Arrange it for me so I can see them, just for a few minutes, that is all, and then I will go away, if necessary, forever."

It was now my turn to hesitate. He was so intensely in earnest I could not repeat the denial.

"But how can I arrange it?" I said. "Tomorrow is Christmas Day—what time can be found for such an appointment?"

Suddenly I stopped. An idea occurred to me. He had half read my thoughts.

"There, that's a good fellow!" he exclaimed eagerly. "You will arrange it for me, won't you?—just a minute or two you know—that's all." I caught his arm.

"Here, quick! Out of the way! Somebody is coming!" I exclaimed.

We hurried off the platform out into the snow, standing there in the shadow of the station. A baggageman passed with his truck. The platform was again deserted.

"Now listen!" I said. "It will be impossible to arrange it for you tonight. It is Christmas Eve, and Mr. Terry has his house full of company. Several friends of Rod's and Bertha's have been visiting them for a week. But tomorrow afternoon there is to be a meet of the skating club on the river. Rod and Bertha will both be there. Do you know where the Basin is—away up stream in the woods on the north shore?"

"Yes, yes; I know."

"Well, be there at—say half past four o'clock. I will see that Rod and Bertha go up there to meet you."

"Thank you—thank you, Harry!" he exclaimed. "I will keep well in the woods till they come. And, Harry, one thing more; suppose you don't tell them who it is. You see I am—well, I am half afraid they might not come if they knew—and I do so want to see them before I go away again—perhaps forever. I *must* see Rod—and I want to see Bertha too."

"Very well," I answered, for I found myself sympathizing with him in spite of myself. "I will arrange it for you without telling them your name. And now, can you keep safe in hiding till then?"

"Trust me for that. I know the town and the country well."

"Then go, for here comes the train."

"All right—thanks, Harry, again—tomorrow, at the Basin, at half past four. Good by."

He grasped my hand, and shaking it hurriedly, turned and walked rapidly away, not into town, but across the snow clad fields.

II.

THE BASIN.

HARD as I tried I could not get rid of a sense of uneasiness that haunted me all Christmas Eve and night. I said nothing to my father on the way home from the

station, and, once home, there were innumerable preparations for the next day to distract me; but through them all the words of that strange conversation kept dinning in my ears, and all through the night the face of Tom Wade stared at me through the darkness, with the red scar seaming its forehead.

The face was not bad or hardened. It was a clear, open, frank face—one to inspire confidence. No wonder he had found it easy to deceive.

It was a troubled, pleading face now, and I owned honestly to myself that I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. Thief he might be—and the crime was all the worse in his case because it bore the additional stain of rank ingratitude to his greatest benefactors—but, after all, it was Christmas Eve, and I could not help thinking that he was perhaps suffering a punishment greater even than jail.

While all his old friends rested securely at home on that happiest of all nights of the year, he must find some place of hiding—homeless and friendless.

Why had he come back? He was no doubt on his way to the Terrys' when I stopped him. What consideration could he expect from them? His visit would have meant simply exposure and public disgrace.

At that thought pity gave way to distrust, and I fairly trembled as I thought what might be the consequences of the appointment for the next day. Then I recalled his earnest insistence that he *must* see Rod, and I concluded that there must be some good reason for this, and at any rate, that I had chosen the best and most secure method of bringing the meeting about.

The skating club meet seemed to me a very fortunate thing. It had been arranged for Christmas Day, to open our season, the winter being late.

Our skating club numbered some thirty members, about evenly divided as regards sex, with perhaps a few more boys than girls.

We met at certain prearranged days on the river during the winter, and took long spins for several miles up, eating supper at the country house of some of our members, and returning by moonlight in the evening—or if there was no moon, we would have stationary "meets" at some portion of the river, where the ice was particularly good, lighting up the place during the evening with huge bonfires of tar barrels.

The Christmas Day "meet" was to be of the latter kind. We were all expected about three o'clock at a part of the river called the "bend" just outside the town. As this was not far from the Lamonts' house we were to have supper there, and then spend the evening again on the ice.

Christmas morning passed rapidly enough, and it was nearly three o'clock be-

fore I could get ready for the river. I reached the ice about half past three, and found almost every one else there.

I looked about at once for Rod and Bertha Terry. Rod was over near the opposite shore skating with his fiancée, Miss Hartley, while Bertha was close by, trying to learn some new figures under the instruction of Guy Lamont. Accordingly I put on my skates, and skimmed idly about, waiting for my opportunity.

Fifteen minutes passed. Bertha Terry was still busy with her figures, while Rod and Miss Hartley came no nearer.

Ten minutes more, and I began to grow impatient.

"Does she expect to keep that up all the afternoon?" I thought.

At that moment Rod and his partner came gliding by, and started up the river.

I crossed their track, greeting them as I did so.

"Look out, Harry!" called Rod, as their skates nearly grazed mine. "We've full steam on, and are off on a long spin."

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"As far as the Basin, if the ice will bear."

My heart sank.

"Tom may mistake them for Rod and Bertha, and show himself," I reflected. "Something must be done at once."

I looked toward the bench. Bertha had finished her practice, and was sitting down. I hurried over to her.

"Will you skate up the river?" I asked.

"By and by, when I have rested," she answered.

"Come now, won't you please?"

"I am too tired. Wait a few minutes."

"If you are tired let me push you. You can rest as you coast along."

I knew that would suit her, for there was nothing Bertha Terry liked better than coasting.

"All right," she said, laughing, and standing up; "but why are you so anxious to go up the river?"

"Rod and Miss Hartley have gone on ahead. Let's see if we can catch up with them?"

"Why, you can't do that. They are out of sight now."

"Never mind, we'll try," I said, and off we started.

I scarcely knew what to do. My ideas were quite upset by Rod's unexpected move. But I had a notion that if Tom Wade saw a group coming he would keep under cover.

"How far up are they going?" asked Bertha, as we shot along, leaving the other skaters well behind us.

"To the Basin, they said."

"Why, that's over a mile from here."

"Yes," I answered, saving my breath, and pressing rapidly forward.

For a minute more there was no sound but the hum of her skates and the click of mine, as I bent down and dashed ahead.

"This is simply glorious!" she exclaimed, as she felt the wind in her face. "But don't tire yourself out."

"*Jamais fatigue*," I laughed, quoting from one of our school French lessons.

"Look!" she suddenly cried. "Here come Rod and Agnes back again."

I glanced ahead. Sure enough, there they were coming toward us with long, swinging strokes.

I felt a sense of relief. It was all right, then. Tom had no doubt kept in hiding—or perhaps he was not yet at the Basin—it was not quite half past four. At any rate, I could now take Bertha there, and he could see her.

"How far up did you go?" called out Bertha, as Rod and Miss Hartley approached.

"Nearly to the Basin," answered Miss Hartley.

"We'll go there and back, and catch up with you," I shouted.

Rod made a movement as if to draw up.

"Don't go to the Basin, Harry," he cried. "The ice is weak."

"If it will hold you it will hold us," I answered.

"Stop, Harry! Bertha, stop him! Come back with us!" called Rod.

His tone was so earnest that I turned and glanced toward him. Although he was some distance off to one side I could detect an unusual expression on his face, which seemed pale in spite of the cold.

Had he seen Tom?

"Hold up, Harry!" he shouted. "Hold up, I say. Don't go any further up—"

But by this time we were out of hearing, and flying along into the woods.

"Why are you so eager to go to the Basin?" asked Bertha.

"There is something I want to show you."

"Something very interesting?"

"You will see."

We were now approaching the spot. The Basin consisted of a small elbow in the river where the current eddied and whirled incessantly. For this reason it never froze. It was a black, forbidding looking spot, and the water was very deep.

At one side there was an outlet leading down underground, where the water flowed by a subterranean channel beneath the woods, reappearing at a small stream in the meadows beyond. This was called the "Hole," and was avoided as a dangerous place.

Knowing this well, it was my intention to slow up as we approached the Basin, but, just as we turned into the elbow, I was startled by the ring of skates somewhere behind us. I turned my head and glanced down the river.

It was Rod Terry. He had left Miss Hartley and was following at full speed.

At that moment, unable to see where I was going, with my head twisted about, I caught my foot in a treacherous crack.

Loosing my grasp of Bertha, I plunged headlong forward and struck the ice with a force that stunned me.

For a few seconds I lay half dazed. Then I heard a scream, and, scrambling wildly up, I looked about me.

The force of my fall had thrown Bertha off her feet, and, half sitting, half lying down, she was gliding along over the smooth ice, clutching vainly at some object to stop herself. Helplessly, hopelessly struggling, she was whirling across the glassy ice *straight for the open Basin*.

A moment more and she would be in the water, and drawn down by the swift current that pours into the "Hole."

One glance she gave at the black, rushing water in front; then she covered her eyes with her hands and screamed again.

In horror I struggled to my feet, and instinctively started forward. But it would be impossible for me to reach her. I could do nothing. My heart stopped beating. The terrible scene grew dim before me.

At that moment a dark object shot out from among the trees, and darted along the ice, just skimming the edge of the Basin.

It came straight across the path of Bertha's whirling body. She was within a few feet of the water when the figure reached her.

There was a shock as the two collided. The force of it drove both of them to one side, and the figure fell to the ice. A second later and they both came to a standstill. They were at the very edge of the water.

Slowly the dark figure rose. It was Tom Wade. Carefully he dragged Bertha's fainting form a few feet from the danger point. Then struggling up, he caught her in his arms. The ice bent beneath the double weight, cracked, and broke. Tom's legs went through to the knees.

"Lie down, Tom! Lie down!" I cried in an agony of suspense.

But he struggled on. First one foot went through, then the other. It was a marvel he did not lose his balance and break through altogether.

Fighting ahead, he stumbled for several steps more, while I, with Rod close behind me, crept cautiously forward.

Then at length Tom's right foot struck firm ice, and held its place. The other foot followed, and a moment later he was beside us, with Bertha in his arms, quite unconscious.

Rod caught his cousin by the shoulders.

"Oh, Tom! Tom!" was all he could say.

"Quick, let's take Bertha home!" I said.

"Straight across fields."

Rod's skates and mine were off in an instant.

"I will carry her home," said Tom.

"Better let Harry and me take her," said Rod. "It's a long way, you know."

"I got her—and I'll take her home, if I

have to carry her a mile," answered Tom promptly.

And certainly Bertha's slender figure seemed but a light burden in his strong arms.

Little was said as we hurried across the fields towards the Terrys' house.

Rod led the way, his face pale and disturbed. Once only he turned and asked to relieve Tom.

"I'll carry her home," repeated Tom. "I have carried heavier burdens than this, Rod—and for a longer time, too."

III.

THE RECKONING.

MR. TERRY was the only member of the family home when we reached the house. A few words explained the situation, and a servant was at once despatched for Mrs. Terry, who had gone down to the ice, while Bertha was taken to the library, where a little attention soon restored her.

Meantime not a word had been said to Tom Wade. Mr. Terry's face had changed when he first saw him, but, in his anxiety for Bertha, he said nothing till he saw her quite herself again. Then the old gentleman turned to us.

"Now tell me the whole story," he said.

Accordingly I gave him a complete account of the accident. When I had finished he turned to Tom.

"I owe my daughter's life to you," he said.

Tom was silent.

"That service has made it impossible for me to speak to you except in gratitude," continued the old gentleman.

There was another awkward silence. Bertha was crying softly.

"How did you come to be here?" asked Mr. Terry.

"It was all a mistake, Uncle Richard," answered Tom. "I ought not to have come back—I see it all now. It was a mistake, and I will go away again tonight."

"Why did you come? You know your danger surely?"

"It is the danger to you that I fear most—and I should not have come. I realize it now. I didn't yesterday. I only wanted to see Rod, and—and—but I will go away, and I will never trouble you again."

Tom turned toward the door.

"Father—don't let him go."

Could that be Rod Terry's voice? Both Mr. Terry and I turned quickly at the sound.

I shall never forget the appearance of Rod's face. It was drawn and pale as death, while drops of perspiration glistened on his forehead.

"Rod, my boy, what's the matter?" exclaimed his father, in alarm.

Rod clutched the back of a chair convulsively.

"You must not let Tom go away," he said. "If any one should go, it is I."

"Now, don't, Rod, don't!" cried Tom, coming forward eagerly. "Think what you are saying? Let me go away. It was all a mistake, my coming. I ought to have known better."

"It was right, Tom," answered Rod. "You should never have had to go. Father, I want to tell you—"

"Don't, I say, Rod!" interrupted Tom. "Can't you see that things are better as they are. Let me go."

"No," answered Rod, and his voice took on a more decisive tone. "I am resolved to speak the truth. I have delayed too long already, but I will see that justice is done now."

"Rod!—Rod! What are you saying? Think a minute!" exclaimed Tom.

"I have thought—not a minute, but for two years. I have been wretchedly weak, but today I am strong—and I will tell the truth."

"Why, what does all this mean?" asked Mr. Terry, gazing at his son in astonishment.

"It means, father," answered Rod, now quite firmly, "that I have been living a lie for two years past."

"A lie?" echoed his father blankly.

"Yes, a lie. The money that was taken from the bank two years ago was not stolen by Tom. *It was stolen by me.*"

Mr. Terry fell back into a chair.

"What—what are you saying?" he gasped.

"I will tell you the whole story," said Rod. "Tom and I, you know, worked side by side at the bank. It was just before my engagement to Agnes. I was anxious to win her, and I saw other fellows sending her flowers and paying her many expensive attentions that pleased her greatly, and that I could not afford on my small salary. I was afraid I would lose her. I was desperate. I was determined to keep pace with the others—but I hadn't the money."

"One day the temptation came to me at the bank. There before me lay the means of happiness. I had only to take a little here and there, and I could give Agnes all the flowers, all the attentions, and more than the wealthiest of the other fellows. I yielded, taking first one small sum, then another."

There was a groan, and Mr. Terry's head sank back, with closed eyes, against his chair.

"There was little fear of detection for a while," continued Rod slowly. "And of course I meant to repay it all before anything could be found out. But as time went on, I began to feel a sense of security. No one suspected. Perhaps no one would ever suspect. So gradually I put off the day of repayment until at last, on reckoning up, I was aghast to find that the amount taken was far more than I could pay in years. Then I thought to cover it up, but that I knew was only a vain hope. It was merely the perfect confidence of the

head cashier that made my position seem secure.

"One day something happened at the bank, and the cashier's suspicions were aroused. He began to investigate. Then it was too late to make the loss good. Even had I been able to get the money it would not have helped me, for everything was being carefully examined.

"Not knowing what to do—with ruin staring me in the face, I turned to Tom as my best friend in the bank, and told him all about my trouble. His decision was made at once. 'It is too late to repair,' he said. 'There must be a scapegoat. Then let it be me. You are just engaged. You have everything to lose. I will go away at once, and you will escape suspicion, for it will light on me.' Like a coward I let him do it. He said he would make sure not to get caught, and perhaps it would blow over after a while."

"I let him go—and the rest you know."

Rod paused.

Mr. Terry's eyes opened slowly and he raised his head wearily and looked in Tom's direction.

"And you did this for my son," he said.

"It was only a fair return, Uncle Richard," answered Tom. "You took me when I was left on the world, and you made a home for me. My life belonged to you, and any service I could do to you or yours—"

"But this was not a service—it was a sacrifice."

"What I had to lose I owed to you," answered Tom. "And I was glad to give it up for you and Rod. I have made a mistake in coming back at all."

"No," answered Rod. "You have the right to come here. It is I that must take the punishment—and I am ready now."

"Don't say that, Rod," said Tom. "Let me go—"

"That is impossible now," interrupted Mr. Terry. "My son has confessed, and you are innocent. You shall not suffer longer."

"Uncle Richard, I am sorry I came back. For myself I never would have come. I must tell you something. I have been living these two years in Montreal, and I have done well. I got a situation at the start, and am now earning a fair salary. This year I, too, became engaged—to the daughter of my employer. Everything went happily until a month ago when in some manner word got to my employer's ears about me.

"He heard from some one of my sudden disappearance from Towanda. He began making inquiries, and ended by telling me that I must give a fuller account of myself. 'I hear that you do not dare go back to Towanda,' he said. 'I do not like these

hints.' I told him I would come back here and—and—don't you see, uncle, I had some one besides myself there to think of and I wanted to set myself right. It meant everything to me —"

"Tom, Tom," interrupted Rod, "you need no excuse to come back. You are free. I am ready to face the consequences. You have suffered too much already. I too have suffered, in a different way, and I will put an end to it. I won't live this lie any longer."

Mr. Terry rose and faced his son.

"Will you go with me tomorrow to the bank?" he asked.

Rod's voice was firm and clear.

"I will," he answered.

"And tell the directors the truth?"

"I will."

"And Agnes?"

Rod's face twitched, and his hands tightened, but he did not hesitate.

"I will face the consequences," he said.

* * * * *

Rod and Bertha were missed at the supper at the Lamonts', and many inquiries were made for them. But their absence was readily understood the next morning when it was learned that Tom Wade had come home.

Only the bank directors and employees knew the circumstances attending his disappearance, and they had kept them carefully quiet, so that Tom was welcomed back without suspicion, and the story of Bertha's rescue, which flew about town like wild fire, made a genuine hero of him.

I cannot tell all that was said at that meeting in Mr. Terry's library, for, feeling that I was an intruder in private affairs, I had slipped away.

But this I do know: Rod and his father went to the bank the next day, and they were closeted with the bank president and my father for over an hour. And there the matter ended.

Mr. Terry had made the missing amount good shortly after Tom's disappearance, and as for prosecution—well, it simply rested.

Convinced of Rod's sincere repentance, it was resolved that he should be allowed a chance to prove himself an honest man.

And he has done so. All this happened some time ago, and now Rod Terry is happily married and occupying a position of trust and responsibility.

As for Tom Wade, he is now living in Montreal, and when he last visited Towanda he brought with him a pretty little Canadian girl who loves all American boys for Tom's sake.

And so that eventful Christmas brought its reckoning, and so, in the end, it made several people wiser and happier.

THE WORLD OF SCIENCE.

THE TUNGSTEN BULLET.

THE gradual diminution of the caliber in modern rifles is of course accompanied by a corresponding reduction in the size of the projectiles. Lead bullets of such a small size are too light, and lack penetrating power, so a metal heavier becomes necessary.

Such a metal is tungsten, which is almost as hard as steel, and has a density varying from 17 to 19.3, say one and a half times that of lead. A tungsten ball penetrates a steel plate three inches in thickness at a distance of 650 yards, while a similar one of lead penetrates a $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch plate at 325 yards only. The present obstacle to the use of tungsten is its high price, but there are indications that this will soon be lowered.

DYNAMITE ENGRAVING.

A NOVEL experiment for the purpose of testing the strength of high explosives is the placing of fresh plucked leaves between two plates of panel steel, and exploding dynamite cartridges on the upper plate.

The recoil in such cases is so great and sudden that the upper plate is driven downward with such force and rapidity as to catch exact impressions of the leaves before their delicate ribs have time to give way to the force of the blow. This novel method of engraving is one of the wonders of the century.

THE BALLOON'S USE IN WAR.

OVER a hamlet in France there recently floated a balloon. Suddenly it appeared to burst, and fell towards the earth. Believing that a disaster had occurred, the terrified spectators ran to the spot where they expected the aërostat would reach the ground.

To their amazement, they saw a parachute detach itself from the car and descend gently. Immediately the earth was touched, one of the passengers jumped upon a small bicycle which he had brought with him from the aerial regions, and disappeared in the direction of Levallois, in the neighborhood of Paris, as fast as he could go.

The explanation of this singular occurrence is simple. The balloon was the Caliban, and the ascent was made from Levallois by Captain Capazza and M. Hervieu, the latter being the cyclist. Their object was to test the possibility of a balloon being used for carrying war despatches, and they assumed that an enemy succeeded in destroying it. Yet they proved that by means of the parachute they would be able to make good their escape, and to out distance their pursuers with the aid of the portable bicycle.

CLEVER BUTTERFLIES.

THE owner of one of the finest collection of butterflies in the country recently made an interesting experiment which proves con-

clusively that butterflies are endowed with a marvelously acute sense of smell.

Out of his collection, comprising almost every known variety, he chose two butterflies, which were only a few days old and had never had their freedom. One of these he attached securely by a thread to the fence in the rear of his house. He placed the other in a small box, after marking it so he could identify it, and carried it to a point about seven miles distant. Here it was turned loose.

When the experimenter reached home, about three hours later, he found two butterflies side by side on his back fence. The butterfly which he had carried away in the box had traveled the seven miles, crossed a wide river, and made its way back to its mate.

This seemed a most extraordinary feat, and for some time he was at a loss to understand how it had been accomplished. On telling the story to an eminent naturalist, my friend was told that it was undoubtedly the sense of smell that had guided the butterfly. The naturalist added that this sense in many animals is so wonderfully acute that the feat of the butterfly did not seem so very remarkable, much less unbelievable.

HOW BIRDS FLY.

DR. MULLENHOFF recently delivered a lecture in Berlin, in which he gave some interesting particulars on the above subject, gleaned by close study.

Many birds, particularly swallows, are unable to fly when the air is quite still. When a bird is on the ground it is a matter of no small difficulty for it to raise itself, and it is always at the mercy of the wind. Whichever direction the wind blows the bird flies against it, by springing in the air and opening its wings. By this means it is lifted up. If the wind is very light the bird has to fly for some time against it in order to get up its speed.

It is for this very reason that most birds choose the tops of trees in which to build their nests. Few birds fly with the wind, for if they did they could have no check upon their speed, and would often be carried far beyond their destination by its force.

KNOTS AND MILES.

To most people these terms are synonymous when speaking of a vessel's speed. It should be remembered that there is a decided difference between the sea knot and the mile.

Three and one half miles equal, within a small fraction, three knots. The result of this difference, of course, is that the speed of a vessel in miles per hour is always considerably larger than when stated in knots, and the confusion of the terms sometimes gives rise to rather remarkable claims of speed performance. When a twenty knot ship, for instance, is mentioned it should be remembered that this really means over twenty three miles.

QUALITIES THAT WIN.

MAJOR HANDY'S UPS AND DOWNS.

MOSES PURNELL HANDY comes of a family which has been prominent in Maryland for many generations. His father, the Rev. J. W. K. Handy, moved to Warsaw, Osage County, Missouri, where the subject of our sketch was born April 14, 1847. Soon afterwards, the little family returned to the East, and settled in



Moses P. Handy.

Delaware, and here young Handy spent his early boyhood. He was educated at the Virginia Collegiate Institute, at Portsmouth, Virginia.

When seventeen years of age, he was allowed to choose between a position in the Baltimore post office, or a course at some university. But the country was in the throes of the civil war at the time, and he declined both offers, and went to Richmond to join his father and brother, running a Federal blockade on the way.

At Richmond he was conscripted into the Confederate army, and assigned to the staff of General Stevens, the chief of engineers in Lee's army, with the rank of lieutenant. The youthful officer saw much service and had

many adventures, which were afterwards embodied in a series of articles published in the *Watchman*.

This was Mr. Handy's first literary output, and it encouraged him to further efforts in that line. He was almost penniless when the war closed, and sought employment on the Richmond daily papers, but without success.

He finally went to Dr. Converse, the editor of the *Christian Observer*, then published in that city. Dr. Converse was an old friend of his father, and gave him a small position. Mr. Handy's opportunity came in the summer of 1867, when Ex-Senator Henry Wilson was canvassing Virginia in the contest for the Vice Presidency. He was announced to speak near Richmond, and Mr. Handy went to the Richmond *Dispatch*, and offered to report the speech for five dollars and his railroad ticket.

The offer was accepted, and Handy reported the speech completely and correctly. His work was so satisfactory that a permanent situation was given to him on the *Dispatch*. Mr. H. K. Ellyson, the editor, proved a helpful friend to the young journalist.

In 1872 when Grant and Greeley opposed each other as candidates for the Presidency, Mr. Handy was editing the *Dispatch*. He also served as Richmond correspondent of several Northern papers, and as general manager for the Southern States of the American Press Association.

The following year the Virginian affair, which created such a sensation at the time, proved a journalistic bonanza to Mr. Handy. The scene of the steamer's surrender to the United States authorities by the Spaniards, had been kept a profound secret by the government; but Mr. Handy ferreted out the mystery, and was the only newspaper correspondent to witness the occurrence.

This marked success brought him into national prominence, and soon afterwards he was proffered a position on the editorial staff of the New York *Tribune*. Mr. Handy accepted, and retained his connection with that paper until 1875, when he resigned to become editor in chief of the Richmond *Enquirer*.

In 1876, Mr. Handy was appointed commissioner from Virginia to the Centennial Exhi-

bition at Philadelphia. On arriving in the Quaker City he was offered an assistant editorship on the Philadelphia *Times*, which he accepted. In 1880, he became managing editor of the Philadelphia *Press*, and as usual his efforts were crowned with success. He devoted his energies to improving the paper, and succeeded so well that its circulation was quadrupled in three years.

Hard work impaired Mr. Handy's health, and he spent several months abroad, recuperating. On his return he founded a new daily in Philadelphia, called the *Daily News*, which, under his management, prove a gratifying success.

During the World's Fair in Chicago last year Major Handy was chief of the department of Publicity and Promotion, and later he served in the same capacity at the Mid Winter Exposition in San Francisco.

He is of medium height and looks younger than he is. His disposition is blithe and good natured, and in movements of both mind and body he is alert and quick.

The major is possessed of a considerable share of this world's goods, and at present is not actively connected with any publication, contenting himself with occasionally contributing to the leading periodicals and newspapers. He has well earned his success, for few men have known a harder struggle with adversity than he.

A NOTED BROOKLYNITE.

LIKE so many of our prominent citizens, Benjamin F. Tracy was born and bred a country boy. He is the son of a farmer living not far from the town of Owego, in Tioga County, New York. He attended school at Owego, and afterwards went to the academy in the town. When eighteen he, began to study law, and three years later he was admitted to the bar.

The young lawyer gained quite a reputation, and two years thereafter the Whig party elected him district attorney of the county. He served for two terms, and was offered a third, but refused. In 1861 he was elected to the State Assembly, and when the session at Albany closed, he served on a committee appointed to recruit soldiers for the Federal army. His district comprised Broome, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties, where he raised the 137th and 109th New York regiments. With the latter organization he went to the front as its colonel. Towards the close of the war he was brevetted as brigadier general of volunteers.

Immediately after the war, he settled in Brooklyn, and practised his profession as a member of the law firm of Benedict, Burr, and Benedict. In 1866 President Johnson appointed him United States district attorney for the Eastern District of New York. President Grant reappointed him in 1871, but in 1873 he resigned, preferring to return to his private practice.

During President Harrison's administration, Mr. Tracy was selected for Secretary of the Navy, and he made a splendid record during his tenure of office. While in Washington, a



Benjamin F. Tracy.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

fire occurred in his residence in which his wife and one of his daughters perished, a calamity which has darkened his recent years.

In appearance he is a well built man, of about medium height, with a closely cropped gray beard. He is a very hard worker, and thoroughly believes in the old maxim, that "what's worth doing at all is worth doing well."

Mr. Tracy has many political enemies in Brooklyn, but his warm friends far outnumber them.

IN our sketch of Walter Q. Gresham, in the October number of *THE ARGOSY*, we inadvertently chronicled the death of Ex-Postmaster General Thomas L. James. Mr. James, we are glad to say, is still living.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

AN INDISPUTABLE REFUTATION.

THE absurd misstatements so frequently made by Englishmen about everything American would be amusing were the persistence with which they are indulged in not so provoking.

Some time ago, three Americans—Mr. Robinson, six feet, and Bishop Phillips Brooks, six feet four inches tall, both of Boston, and the Rev. Dr. McVicker, of Philadelphia—made, in company, a trip to England. *En route*, they determined that, when they should reach that country, they would travel apart, lest three such tall men together might provoke remark. But arriving at a well known town in Yorkshire, and learning that a lecture was to be delivered on America, they determined to be present. Entering the hall separately, they took seats apart.

As the lecturer proceeded, his utter ignorance of America soon became manifest. Finally a statement concerning the size of Americans was too absurd to be endured in silence. The speaker had concluded a sentence asserting that Americans are short of stature, never exceeding at the utmost five feet ten inches, when Mr. Robinson arose and said:

"My friends, I am an American, and, as you see, I measure fully six feet. If there is any other American who happens just now to be in the house, I request him to stand up."

An expression of surprise was followed by roars of laughter, as the Rev. Phillips Brooks arose and said:

"I am an American, and my height, six feet four inches, occasions no particular remark in America. If there is any other American in the house, I in turn request him to stand up."

After a lapse of a few seconds, in order to give the lecturer a little time to recover himself, Dr. McVicker slowly raised his majestic figure to his full height of six feet six, and began:

"I am an Am——"

But this was too much, and he could not get any further. The audience had lost all control of themselves, and the speaker's disappearance from the stage brought the entertainment to a premature close.

MUSICAL ANIMALS.

OUR readers may have noticed how music affects some of their pets. Animals differ as much in their fondness or aversion for different instruments, as do human beings.

Dogs, as is well known, are often taught to dance to the violin, and even to grind hand organs. But a judicious dog finds the harmonium trying. A writer records the case of a dog—a cross between a Scotch and a Skye terrier—who would come close to a harmonium and evidently enjoy the music, up to a certain point. But when a shrill note came from that instrument of torture, he would point his nose in the air

at an angle of about forty degrees, and, stiffening his body in a straight line from the nostrils to the tail, emit the same note, in a manner which indicated his displeasure, and sustain it as long as did the performer.

Cats, we are told, have little natural liking for music, but the taste can be acquired. A certain pet cat, though as a kitten indifferent to music, grew to like it, and regularly led the way to the piano when tea was over. Here she took post on a chair, and listened gravely during the whole performance. When it ceased she would go to sleep, though not if the instrument were left open, in which case puss instantly leaped on the keys and pawed a performance of her own, in which she showed an extreme partiality for the treble notes, and something like alarm at the lower bass ones, when she happened to give them an extra vigorous kick.

A NEAT RETORT.

WHEN James Russell Lowell was in England, he was once invited to dine by Lord Granville, who in his message apologized for the suddenness of the invitation, adding, "It is absurd to give so short a notice to the most engaged man in London."

"The most engaged man in London is very glad to dine with the most engaging one," the poet replied.

A COSTLY INSTRUMENT.

THINK of paying ten thousand dollars for a violin! Yet that is what a gentleman from Edinburgh paid for one only a year or two ago. Of course it was a Stradivarius, and its pedigree is both interesting and romantic.

When the sons of Stradivarius died, this particular violin was sold to Count Salabue, who kept it as long as he lived. Then Luigi Tarisio got on the track of the priceless gem, bought it, and hid it away as a miser hides gold. He would not show it even to his nearest friends.

The eccentric Tarisio was found one morning dead among his old violins, and three months later the star of the collection was bought by Vuillaume, the celebrated French dealer. So much did he prize the instrument that when the Franco German war broke out he buried it in a damp proof, air tight box, and kept it underground until peace had been restored.

At length he, too, died, and the violin passed to his daughter, Madame Alard. When madame went the way of all flesh the instrument came into the open market, and Mr. Crawford, of Edinburgh, bought it for the sum already named—the highest figure ever paid for a violin. Messrs. Hill, through whom the purchase was made, wrote at the time: "It is the fiddle of Europe, of fabulous newness of appearance and state of preservation. It is a famous possession, and absolutely unique, and

the names of its possessors will certainly be handed down to posterity."

The varnish, which is acknowledged to contain something of the lost secret, looks as fresh as if it had been put on a week ago; and as to the tone, Herr Joachim declares that it surpasses that of all other violins he has ever heard.

APPLAUSE TO ORDER.

In certain playhouses it has been charged that the applause bestowed on inferior productions has been the result of the efforts of the ushers and the recipients of the free tickets. If this is so, and we are afraid there is no good reason for doubting it, it is by no means an innovation of modern times.

History tells us that when Nero sang in public five thousand trained men thundered their plaudits. They were trained men, for approval was of various degrees and kinds: *bombi*, a sound like the droning of bees; *imbrices*, imitating the patter of falling rain; *ierre*, the clashing of broken jugs. The last was the invention of Nero himself, and was produced by striking the fingers of the right hand on the palm of the left.

Another variety of applause was obtained by the snapping of countless fingers, and satisfaction was also shown by the shaking of the robe. Aurelian used to have strips of linen and other materials distributed among the people for this purpose, and we can well imagine the stirring effect produced by this universal waving of bright colors in the densely thronged amphitheater.

It is said that Nero imposed a death penalty on all spectators who did not applaud him, so it is probable that the *curatores*, or leaders, and *juvenes*, as their men were called, were appointed chiefly with a view of approbation at convenient moments.

A CAT'S COMMERCIAL VALUE.

It is not generally known that cats have a peculiar commercial importance in certain lines of trade. Marine insurance in some parts of the country does not cover damage done to the cargo by the depredation of rats, but if the owner of the cargo thus damaged can prove that the ship was not furnished with a cat he can recover compensation from the vessel's owner.

Then, again, a ship that is found under certain circumstances without a living creature on board is considered a derelict, and according to certain conditions is forfeited. It has not infrequently occurred, after all the crew have been lost, or the ship otherwise abandoned, that a live canary, domestic fowl, but most frequently a cat, being found on board, has saved the vessel from being condemned as derelict. Consequently ship owners, considering the cat's proverbial tenacity of life, as well as its presence being a bar to claims of damage by rats, always take care not to send a ship to sea without having a cat on board.

THE CZAR SCARED HIM.

DURING one of the magnificent court balls at St. Petersburg, under the Emperor Nicholas, an officer while dancing accidentally tripped up a grand duchess, bringing her to the floor. Her imperial highness waxed furious at the

mishap, and denounced the object of her wrath as "a clumsy camel."

The officer thought himself lost when the grim Czar approached him, seized him by the cuff, and marched him deliberately out of the ball room. Not a word was spoken until they reached a passage in which stood a painful of powdered chalk. "Rub the soles of your boots into that," said the Czar sternly.

THE ORIGIN OF RED UNIFORMS.

ARMY officers in China and Japan used to don hideous masks before going into battle in order to strike terror to the hearts of the foe. The very idea seems to us ridiculous, yet the legionaries of ancient Rome wore the skins of animals in war to make them look fiercer, and, for the same reason, put figures of savage beasts on their helmets and shields.

The idea of scaring the enemy by such devices has been perpetuated up to quite recent times. Tall bearskin hats were originally adopted to make them look taller by the French grenadiers, each of whom carried a handful of grenades for scattering among the ranks of the foe.

Red uniforms were first adopted by the Emperor Valerius Maximus in order that the Roman soldiers might not be frightened by the sight of their own blood. To this day the children of England are told that this is the reason why French troops wear red trousers, and French children are taught the same notion respecting the red coats of the British.

COULD DO BOTH.

THE late Mr. George Healy, the famous American portrait painter, once told an interesting anecdote of the time he painted the portrait of Pope Pius IX.

Becoming tired, His Holiness suddenly stood up, and came over to see how the artist was progressing. Mr. Healy was annoyed at this interruption, and exclaimed somewhat sharply:

"I beg your Holiness to sit down."

The Pope laughed, and said, "I am accustomed to give orders, not to receive them. But you see, Mr. Healy, that I also know how to obey." With this he submissively went back to his chair.

PATTI'S PARROTS.

MADAME PATTI'S fondness for pets is notorious, and she has quite a menagerie. It is said that her parrots are her favorites, however, and she possesses a great number of them.

She has parrots white, and parrots green, birds that speak Welsh, and those that speak French, and one that is so highly educated in different languages, including the profane, that Madame Patti is obliged to keep him away from her other pets, lest he ruin their morals, for she says that he can swear like a trooper in six different tongues, having been trained to this accomplishment by the sailor master from whom his present owner purchased him.

It is said that she paid five thousand dollars for one of these birds. But then—it is not every one who can make, in one evening, sufficient money to gratify such an expensive whim.

FLOATING FUN.

UNTRUSTWORTHY.

A SAILOR of unmistakably Hibernian ancestry once wanted to ship on a steamer being fitted out for an extended voyage. On learning the applicant's nationality, the captain refused to take him without a character.

The discharge was obtained, and, as the Irishman was presenting it, another seaman came up and said he wanted to join.

"What line were you on?" asked the captain.

"Cunard, sir."

"What countryman?"

"English, your honor."

"All right, go forward."

Shortly after, as the two were washing the decks in a heavy sea, the Englishman was swept overboard, bucket and all. Unmoved, Paddy finished his job, and then went to the captain's cabin.

"Come in," responded the officer, to his rap.

"What's up now?"

"You remember Bill Smith, the Englishman and Cunarder?" queried Pat.

"Certainly, my man."

"You took him without a character?"

"I believe so; what of that?"

"Well, he's gone overboard wid your bucket."

THE GENTLEMAN AND THE SNOB.

THERE is a species of animal resembling man in appearance, who is distressingly numerous. One of these animals was just finishing his dinner when a gentleman entered and took a seat at the same table. As the gentleman was beginning his dinner the snob calmly lit a cigar, and blew a cloud of smoke over the table.

The gentleman rose and said in the politest tone, "Excuse me, sir; will it annoy you if I eat while you are smoking?"

TRUSTED TO PROVIDENCE.

CORNISH miners are accustomed to smoking a pipe of "bacca" just before going down and after coming up from the shaft. For this purpose they frequently borrow tobacco from one another. One fellow was very good natured, and consequently his companions imposed upon him. He finally lost his patience, and resorted to an ingenious artifice to avoid lending the fragrant weed.

He kept two tobacco boxes. The one which was always empty he named, "The World"; the other, often full, was called "Providence."

When asked for a "pipe of 'bacca," he would reply, "I haven't a bit in 'The World.'"

"What are you going to do for a smoke, then?"

"Trust to 'Providence,' my boy, trust to 'Providence,' for it rarely ever fails."

HE WAS EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

A LECTURER encountered a particularly boisterous audience one night, who, not content with hurling epithets, hurled a number of cabbages as well. The lecturer brought his entertainment to a close with the remark that he had hoped the audience would be pleased, but he really hadn't expected that they would lose their heads entirely.

"HOW CAN WE?"

A LADY clad in gorgeous and expensive attire attended a concert with her husband not long ago. On leaving the hall they discovered that it was raining in a most businesslike manner. They were without umbrella or waterproof, and, as usual when wanted, no cab was in sight.

"Why, Charles!" the lady cried, "it's raining."

"So I see," said Charles calmly.

"Well, what shall we do?"

"I rather think we shall have to let it rain," replied the matter of fact husband.

Excited by the disaster awaiting her garments, the lady amused the bystanders greatly by saying: "Why, Charles, how can we, when I have on this light dress and bonnet?"

NOT THERE.

A FINE collection of instruments of torture, showing the celebrated "Iron Maiden," was being exhibited at a small town recently. Among the visitors were a couple of suburban residents.

"I say, Bill," said one; "they've got 'em all here, haven't they?"

Bill looked over the collection very carefully, and shook his head.

"No," he replied, "they haven't. I don't see anything of that squeaky old clarinet you practise on every night."

"GO SOMEWHERE!"

TOWARD the end of the war, horses in the Confederate army became very scarce. All dismounted cavalymen were sent to the infantry, so a remount became a serious question with many troopers.

Jim Wilson, of the Rockbridge troop, lost his horse, and unable to get another, possessed himself of a white mule named Simon. One day a squad was enjoying a dinner with a sympathetic farmer, when a sudden alarm was given.

"Run, boys, run—the Yankees are coming!"

There was mounting in hot haste, and some

escaped by the front gate, and some by the rear. Jim dashed at the front gate, but Simon, displaying his mule nature for the first time, balked. Jim wheeled him around and drove at the rear gate, but Simon balked again. At this poor Jim looked over his shoulder, saw the blue coats rapidly approaching, threw his arms around Simon's neck, and called in agonized tones:

"Oh, Simon, for goodness' sake, go somewhere!"

THEY WERE ALREADY PAID.

A FEMININE Chicagoan had a pet canine upon which she lavished vast quantities of love; but the ungrateful little beast died.

"He was a beautiful little dog," said a caller, doing her best to offer sympathy. "It must be a real bereavement to have to lose him. Can't—can't you take his remains to the taxidermist's?"

"I think," was the reply, with a fresh burst of tears, "we had already paid the taxes on him."

THE LAWYER'S REQUEST.

A JUDGE and a lawyer were taking an ocean voyage together not long ago. Missing his companion, the judge instituted a search, and found the lawyer suffering terribly from seasickness.

"Can I do anything for you?" said the judge.

"Yes," gasped the seasick lawyer; "I wish your honor would overrule this motion."

IT DIDN'T WORK.

A SAD eyed and weary wanderer was in need of refreshment recently, so he concocted the following scheme to fill his long felt want.

"If you please, mum," he began, "I wish you would gimme something to eat. That there woman next door gimme a handout, but on the dead, the stuff wasn't fit—"

"See here," was the answer he got, "that woman next door is my mother, and if you aren't out of here in less than ten seconds, I'll set the dog on you. Now, you git."

He got.

NOT QUITE READY.

CHRISTMAS stories are just now quite apropos, so the following may prove acceptable.

At a Sunday school Christmas entertainment last year one of the speakers depicted the beauties of heaven in language suitable to be digested by the infantile heads around him. "And now," he asked, "how many little boys and girls in the infant class want to go to heaven?"

All hands went skyward but one.

"Why, little boy, don't you want to go?"

"Yeth, thir," he said as he glanced at the pile of candy yet undistributed; "yeth, sir, but not for a few minuths yet."

THE RIVAL BARBERS.

THERE were two barbers in a certain town, and very naturally, they became jealous of each other.

One of the two, by way of advertising himself cut his hair in the most faultless manner,

according to the latest fashion plate; the other, on the contrary, cut his in the most clumsy way imaginable. The first customer who entered his shop did not fail to notice it.

"How in the world, being yourself a barber, do you have your hair so badly cut?"

"Why, sir, the reason is simple enough. I cannot possibly cut my hair myself, but am obliged to have recourse to my colleague over the way, and he is such a duffer!"

"And I suppose you cut his in turn?"

"Of course. And you can judge for yourself whether he oughtn't to be satisfied."

NO USE FOR A BOY.

A COUNTRY lad came to the metropolis not long ago looking for a job. He didn't meet with any luck, and finally tackled a down town merchant.

"I have no use for a boy," the merchant said discouragingly.

"You're just like I am, ain't you?" asked the boy.

"How's that?"

"Got no use for a boy. Neither have I. That's why I'm looking around for somebody that has. Me and you ain't the only people in town, though. I s'pose there's about two hundred thousand more here, and likely some of 'em's different from us. Anyhow, I'm going to hustle around and see. Good morning, sir," and the boy started out, but the boss reconsidered, and took him at two dollars a week as a starter.

HE COULDN'T SAY.

A BLASÉ young man whose attire suggested the very latest London fashion plate, wandered into a down town restaurant recently.

He meandered to the further end of the room, dropped languidly into a seat, scanned carelessly the bill of fare, and finally ordered broiled mackerel.

After several minutes the waiter returned with the order. The dude picked daintily at the fish, tasted it, and started; he took another cautious mouthful and turned pale.

"See heah, waitaw! This is an imposition!"

"No, sah. It's a mackerel."

"Menial! How dare you! It isn't fresh!"

"Well, I can't say as to that, sah. I've only been here a week."

TOO GOOD MEASURE.

'WAY up in Maine there lives an odd character, who combines eccentricity, religious fervor, and profanity, in a most singular fashion.

One autumn when the snow was too thin for snowshoeing, the "character" got very uneasy, as he was anxious to go hunting. He fussed about for several days, and at last fell to praying fervently. "Send snow, Lord! Send five dollars' worth," was the burden of his supplication.

That very night the storm struck, a regular blizzard, and before it was over the snow lay three feet everywhere. As it was as light as feathers it was no better for snowshoeing than when there was none, and the disgusted hunter looked out of doors ruefully.

"If I had known the blamed stuff was so thunderin' cheap," he exclaimed in his vexation. "I wouldn't have prayed for more than a dollar's worth."

THE EDITOR'S CORNER.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

BEGINNING with the January number THE ARGOSY will be issued on the first of the month for which it bears date, thus going out at the same time with MUNSEY'S. This will be a convenience both to the publishers and the public.

In our next number we shall have the pleasure of printing the opening instalment of a new serial by an old favorite. "DARAK EDWARDS' ORDEAL," by Edward S. Ellis, is a story that combines in rare degree the elements of an interest that is both domestic and adventurous in its nature. The dramatic scene in the school room at the very opening, where Darak Edwards' high hopes are dashed to earth in a breath, pitches the reader's interest on a high plane, where Mr. Ellis cleverly manages to keep it to the end. The recent forest fires in the West play an important part in the development of the plot and afford the opportunity for some thrilling descriptive work.

Remember that this serial begins in the next number, ready January 1st, which will contain in addition other matter of unusual attractiveness.

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

THE young girl in Tennyson's poem is made to say: "Wake me early, mother, for tomorrow will be the brightest day of all the glad new year."

Well, we can't all be May queens, so it is perhaps fortunate that a good many of us are inclined to doubt the sincerity of the maiden in the poem when she asserts that there is no brighter day in the calendar than the first of May. If a vote were taken from the boys and girls in Christendom as to which day out of the 365 they could least afford to spare, it would not require a remarkably astute prophet to predict that it would be the 25th of December.

Fourth of July may be more noisily rollicking; Thanksgiving may be more prolific of turkey and pumpkin pie; the other holidays may be warmly welcomed as bringing freedom from school tasks; but as a day on which the very atmosphere seems irradiated with joy and good humor and well wishes, the day of the Dutch saint stands out supreme. Brotherly kindness breathes out of the greeting "Merry

Christmas," and the animosity that lingers in defiance of this attempt to thaw it out, must be frigid indeed.

This is the wish THE ARGOSY brings its thousands of readers on this, its December voyage. May their highest hopes know no shade of disappointment, and may the reunion of kindred spirits, and the sight of happiness all about them, inspire them with a gladness that shall shed its influence far into the coming year.

A PLEA FOR PRAISE.

SOME one has been writing lately about the scarcity of praise as compared with the preponderance of blame in every day life. If a thing that a son or a brother or a friend does displeases us, we are so much more prone to say so than we are to commend him for that which he does to give us pleasure. And even if we do say "Thank you," it is scarcely ever much more. The vocabulary of the scold is larger by a good deal than that of the man who is grateful for favors received. People are not so apt to say why they are pleased as to go into the particulars of why they are wrathful.

Would not the Christmas season be a good time to start a reform in this matter? Recognition of hearty, honest effort to do the right thing, that accomplishes its object, is very far removed from flattery. The spur of praise is a better and surer method of urging a man on to do his best than is the prick of the goad.

NOTICE OF REMOVAL.

THE offices of THE ARGOSY have been removed to 149 and 151 Fifth Avenue, corner of 21st Street. A constantly growing business made larger quarters a necessity, and these have been secured at the above address.

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

WE signalize the holiday season this month by printing a larger amount than usual of fiction complete in one issue. This has crowded out the department devoted to "Correspondence." It will be resumed next month.

Our readers have a real treat before them in William Murray Graydon's new serial, started this month. "The Sun God's Secret" is full of the thrilling situations the boy reader loves.

THE ARGOSY OF PAST YEARS.

If you wish a complete file of THE ARGOSY, don't forget that the only way in

which you can obtain it is by purchasing the bound volumes, as the separate numbers have long since been out of print. The stock of bound volumes, too, is fast disappearing; the price must soon be raised.

At present the first two are rated at five dollars each; the others, of the weekly edition, at \$1.50 apiece, with the exception of Vol. XII, consisting of thirteen numbers, the supply of which is exhausted.

These back volumes contain rich things in the way of stories and pictures. Very few of the serials have been reprinted in book form. The gift of one or more of these books to a friend would be a Christmas present he would appreciate highly.

Information about the latest bound volume—XVIII, and the first of the magazine form—will be found under the title, "A Christmas Hint."

WHERE THE CHANCE LIES.

ONE of the New York papers some time since printed an editorial headed, "Some Lessons for Young Men." The writer bewailed the fact that hundreds were going unemployed because they were able to do merely routine clerical work, such as keeping books and selling goods. There are fifty applicants for every small position that becomes vacant. Why? Because unskilled labor can fill it.

What is the remedy? Find out some kind of work toward which you have a special leaning and seek to perfect yourself in it so far as you are able. Never mind if it does require you to wear an apron or overalls. The men who are nearest the top, began, as a rule, closest to the bottom.

The writer mentioned cited the case of a young man who offered to do bookkeeping for a steam heating firm at eight dollars a week. The reply was that there was no vacancy here, but that if the applicant knew the heating business, he would be engaged on the spot at \$1,800 a year.

Steam and electricity call for skilled minds and deft hands to manage them. They form the opportunity; it remains for the boy with ambition to embrace it.

A CHRISTMAS HINT.

THE problem of selecting Christmas gifts is a perplexing one, delightful as the task is supposed to be in the abstract. "If the article were only for ourselves, now," we sometimes think, "how quickly we could reach a decision." Here is a suggestion that may possibly help a good many of you out of your dilemma.

For only one dollar you can obtain the last volume of *THE ARGOSY*, beautifully bound in cloth, five styles to choose from, any of them making an exceedingly attractive book of over 650 pages. These six numbers—April to September—are richly stocked with stories, long and short, and

embellished with pictures that not only delight the eye but refine the taste.

And such a gift would be appropriate for either boy or girl; aye, many an older person would find much to enjoy in the volume. Put it down on your list. You certainly receive the full worth of your money. Most books cost \$1.25, and are only a third the size of this one. Remember the price is but a single dollar, with thirty cents to be added for postage when ordered by mail.

FOR THE EDITOR'S CHRISTMAS.

WHEN a man admires a thing, he does not always take the pains to state the fact. The publishers of *THE ARGOSY* are fortunate in having a class of patrons who not only enjoy, but become so enthusiastic over the object that pleases them that they do not rest content until they put their thoughts on paper, and mail them to this office. Communications like the subjoined help to make the editor's Christmas a merry one:

S. W. COR. DEARBORN & WASHINGTON STS.,
CHICAGO, October 18, 1894.

In glancing over the papers in a book store the other day I saw *THE ARGOSY*. I bought it, and I can honestly say that it is the most interesting book that I have ever read.

B. M. FOLLETT.

MCKEESPORT, PA., Oct. 22, 1894.

I wish to tell you what I think of your magazine: it's up to date; it's an educator in a way. I refer to "Quaint and Curious," "Editor's Corner," "Correspondence," and other things in it, worthy of time from older heads.

L. E. WELLES.

CHARLESTON, S. C., Sept. 22, 1894.

I have taken *THE ARGOSY* since I was twelve years old (I am now sixteen), and my older brother took it several years before that; therefore I have a very kindly feeling for it, and think that it is the best boys' paper in existence.

EDGAR B. HUGUENIN.

HONESDALE, PA., Sept. 29, 1894.

We would like to say a few words of praise for *THE ARGOSY*. We think it simply superb, and would rather go without a good meal (which, by the way, goes a good way with us) than miss a copy.

ALFRED L. SCHILLER.

FRED KRANTZ.

GAIL JENKINS.

JOS. CAULFIELD.

WATERTOWN, ME., Oct. 1, 1894.

I have read a great number of boys' papers, but I think *THE ARGOSY* beats them all.

LEO C. FULLER.

MIDDLEBORO, MASS., Oct. 23 1894.

I have taken *THE ARGOSY* but four months, and have found no other boys' magazine or paper that will beat it. It is the best and cheapest that I have ever read.

WINFRED E. BRYANT.

261 EAST SEVENTH ST.,

NEW YORK, Oct. 15, 1894.

I have read *THE ARGOSY* for the last year, and I must say that it is the best magazine I have ever read.

JOHN E. TRAINOR.

STAMP DEPARTMENT.



NYASSA LAND, a Portuguese colony lying just north of Mozambique, and situated between Lake Nyassa and the Indian Ocean, has recently issued a set of stamps similar to cut. The colors and denominations are as follows:

10 r, rose; 20 r, violet; 50 r, green; 5 r on 10 r, rose; 75 r on 20 r, violet; and 100 r on 50 r, green.

We advise Ray M. not to insert his facsimiles in his stamp album, as they are nothing but pictures of stamps. Reprints are somewhat more entitled to recognition from collectors, because they are printed from the original plates. There are a few used reprints in existence, but almost invariably they are reproduced as souvenirs or curiosities.

The new United States stamps will be of entirely different design from the Columbian varieties of a year ago. The fifty cent stamp will bear the portrait of Jefferson, and the one dollar variety that of Perry, whose face formerly decorated the ninety cent stamp. John Marshall will be represented on the two dollar, while James Madison will appear on the five dollar issue. These changes, together with those of the newspaper and postage due stamps, will necessitate not a little increase in the space hitherto deemed sufficient for the accommodation of the United States in collectors' albums.

The stamps of Afghanistan are, as our illustration shows, of a most peculiar design. Our cut is one of three new varieties, not unlike the preceding issue.

They are 2 abassi and 1 rupee regular adhesive issue, and a 2 abassi registration stamp. All are printed in black on green paper.

J. M. Kelly and a number of other ARGOSY readers have sent inquiries as to where to buy stamps or catalogues. We think if our readers will patronize the firms represented in the advertising columns of THE ARGOSY, they will find them thoroughly reliable. Give them a trial, boys.

It grieves us to have to inform our Boston correspondent that the million stamp story is a myth pure and simple, and that so far as helping some aged and indigent person to a comfortable home, his labor has been in vain. The rumor has been in circulation a number of years now, and was probably started by some unscrupulous stamp dealer. The amount of credence it has gained is astonishing.

Many persons have heard it, and without any attempt at verification, have started to collect stamps. After pestering all their relatives and friends for weeks, they realize just how many a million is, or perhaps learn the truth about the report, and then abandon their self imposed task. The stamps thus accumu-

lated fall into the hands of dealers, who keep those of any value to them, and ship the others to Europe or some other part of the world where they may be disposed of to advantage.

The stamps issued by the Swiss cantons in 1843-48 are an interesting and valuable series—too valuable, unfortunately to be found in many young collectors' albums. Zurich, Basle, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Geneva, and Winterthur were the stamp issuing cantons. Comparatively few of these stamps were used, as they were superseded in 1850 by a governmental issue, designed for both French and German cantons, and bearing corresponding inscriptions in both languages.

In 1854 a uniform type replaced them, bearing the valuations in rappen, centesimi, and centimes. These remained current for eight years, when a new series, ranging in value from two centimes to one franc, with the name "Helvetia," was issued.

In February, 1871, when the French army under General Bourbaki were interned in Switzerland, the government issued stamps for their use which freed their letters through the post. They were very simple, being printed in black on colored paper, and bore the inscription, "*Militaires français internés en Suisse. Grátis.*"

Another set of stamps emanating from the Franco-German war was those issued by the Prussian government for the especial use of the annexed French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The design consisted merely of the numeral of value, with the inscriptions "*Postes*" and "*Centime*" printed upon tinted paper.

"Eric Dane" writes us to inquire about the portraits on the set of United States stamps issued in 1870. They were as follows: 1 cent, blue, Franklin, after Rubrecht; 2 cent, brown, Jackson, after Powers; 3 cent, green, Washington, after Houdon; 6 cent, red, Lincoln, after Volk; 10 cent, chocolate, Jefferson, after Powers' statue; 12 cent, purple, Clay, after Hart; 15 cent, orange, Webster, after Clevenger; 24 cent, purple, Scott, after Coffee; 30 cent, black, Hamilton, after Corrachii; and 90 cent, carmine, Perry, after Wolcott's medallion. The 7 cent, red, Stanton, was photographed from life.

We must apologize to Albin H. Lord for not having been more prompt in answering his questions. The brown five cent stamp which bears Garfield's portrait was issued in 1882, the year after his death. The five cent blue, same design, was not issued until 1888.

Grilled stamps are those having small square indentations on the back. This is to allow the ink, when the stamp is canceled, to penetrate the paper, and prevent any one from washing off the cancelation marks. This process is sometimes called embossing. The United States stamps issued in 1868 bore grills.





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